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Premiere ▶ 22 September 2018, Erkel Theatre

Further dates ▶ 23 September; 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 October 2018

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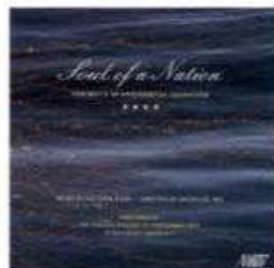
A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

V Bond

'Soul of a Nation – Portraits of Presidential Character'

Soul of a Nation^a. The Indispensable Man^b. The Crowded Hours^c. Pater patriae^d

^dGabriela Vargas *fl* ^bJohn Bruce Yeh *cl* ^cMark Ridenour *tpt* ^aFrank Almond *vn* ^dAdrian Dunn, ^aHenry Fogel, ^cRay Frewen, ^bDavid Holloway *narrs* ^{bcd}Chicago College of Performing Arts Wind Ensemble / Stephen Squires; ^aRoosevelt University Chamber Orchestra / Emanuele Andrizzi
Albany © TROY1723 (62' • DDD)



At a time when presidential character has become a focus of international debate,

Victoria Bond's optimistic quartet of narrated musical portraits of Washington, Lincoln and the two Roosevelts – presidents known for their character – seems out of time and place. Perhaps they would be ideal fare for Midwest summer concerts – and perhaps such inspirational fare is what is needed.

Bond infuses into her portraits lots of rollicking Americana humour and characteristic energy, as in the opening of *The Crowded Hours*, devoted to Teddy Roosevelt and featuring stunning playing by the Chicago Symphony's trumpeter Mark Ridenour and involving narration by Ray Frewen.

Each of the four is subtitled a concerto and each demands a virtuoso's chops but they are equally well described as hybrid entertainments in which the words are brilliantly illuminated by Bond's kaleidoscopic scoring. The freewheeling range of musical influences, from Yankee fife-and-drum tunes to circus calliopes and Broadway jazz, combine to give size and visceral excitement to the experience.

For *Soul of a Nation*, the most intoxicating of the four, Bond based her music on an edition of Corelli's *La folia* found in Jefferson's library. The angelic ending under Frank Almond's soaring violin solo concludes a particularly touching love letter.

GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

Jeffrey Douma

The conductor of Yale Choral Artists discusses the music on their new album, 'Statements'



How did you compile this programme?

David Lang, Ted Hearne and Hannah Lash all have deep connections to the Yale School of Music. David and Hannah teach composition at Yale, and Ted did his graduate work here several years ago. I've worked with all three on various projects over the years, and was excited about doing something that brought them together. Also, some of the themes addressed by these works (exploring the language of consent, contemplating life in a society characterised by unequal opportunity) seemed particularly timely.

How do the musical languages vary?

Each of these composers has a unique and profoundly original voice, but they share an incredible attention to craft and a penetrating thoughtfulness in all of their music.

What were the challenges for the choir?

All of these works presented unique challenges for the musicians. The primary

challenge in David's piece (for both singers and instrumentalists) was conveying the directness and defiance of the Eugene Debs text he chose to set. The singers had to negotiate *Consent's* highly complex musical and textual layers, often one to a part. And Hannah's vocal and instrumental writing in her stunning new Requiem is so intricate and refined – with each note you feel like you are adding one more small detail to a perfect, delicate sculpture. But when new works are this engaging, the singers relish the challenge.

What are your forthcoming plans?

We have recently performed a lot of new music, so we're going a different direction next and exploring well-known works by Herbert Howells and Heinrich Schütz.

The playing by the four soloists must have been a composer's dream. Each does their best to identify with their theme and is partnered with great enthusiasm by a talented chamber orchestra and wind ensemble from Roosevelt University, where the excellent recordings were made between 2012 and 2017.

Laurence Vittes

Daugherty

Dreamachine^a. Relctions on the Mississippi^b. Trail of Tears^c

^cAmy Porter *fl* ^bCarol Jantsch *tuba*

^aDame Evelyn Glennie *perc*

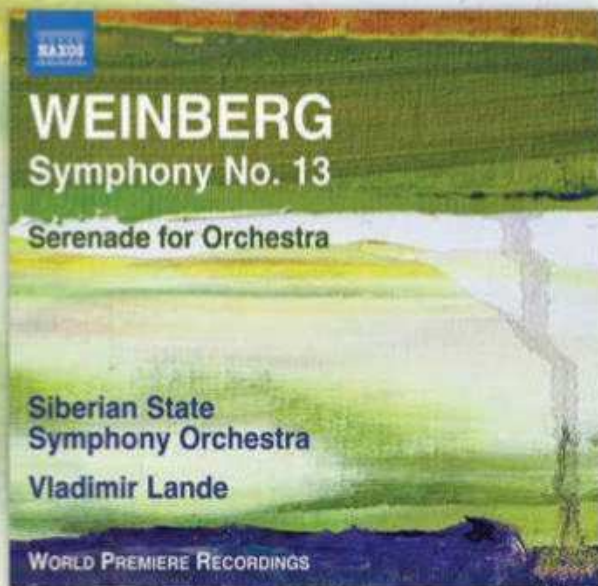
Albany Symphony Orchestra / David Alan Miller
Naxos American Classics © 8 559807 (78' • DDD)



Michael Daugherty (b1954) has

20 concertos to his name and this highly

enjoyable Naxos disc draws together three of his most recent. The centrepiece here is Evelyn Glennie's scintillating performance of *Dreamachine* (2014), his third percussion concerto following *UFO* (1999) and – for timpani – *Raise the Roof* (2003). *Dreamachine* was inspired by fantastical machines in its first three movements ('Da Vinci's Wings', 'Rube Goldberg Variations' – Goldberg being



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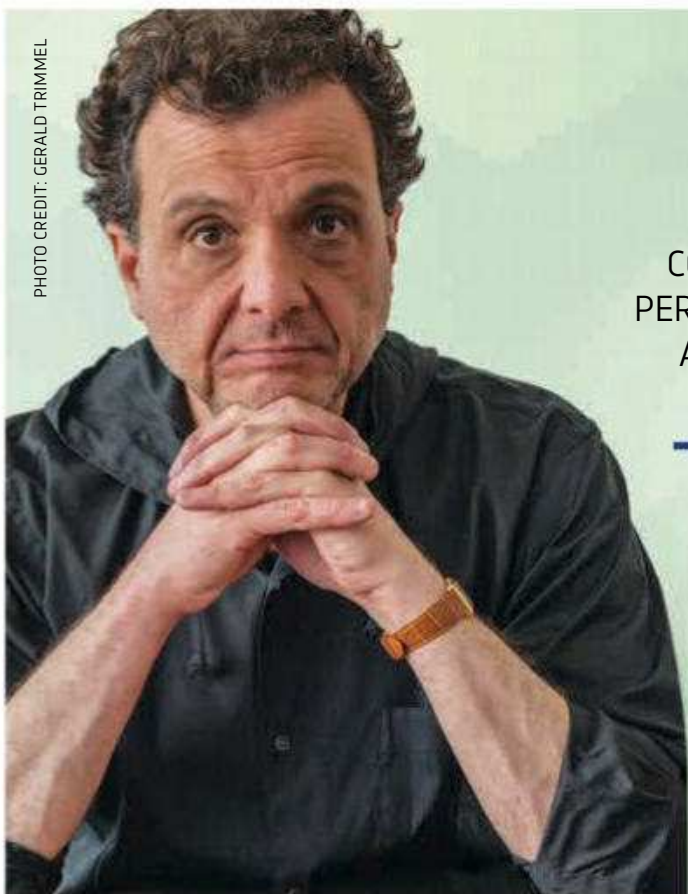


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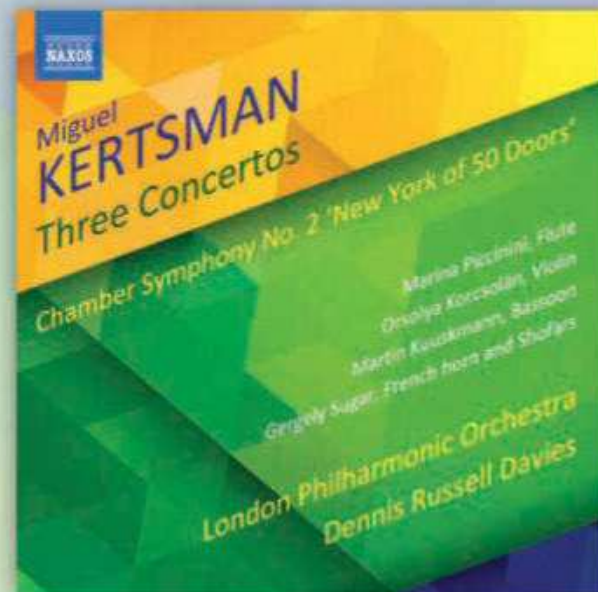
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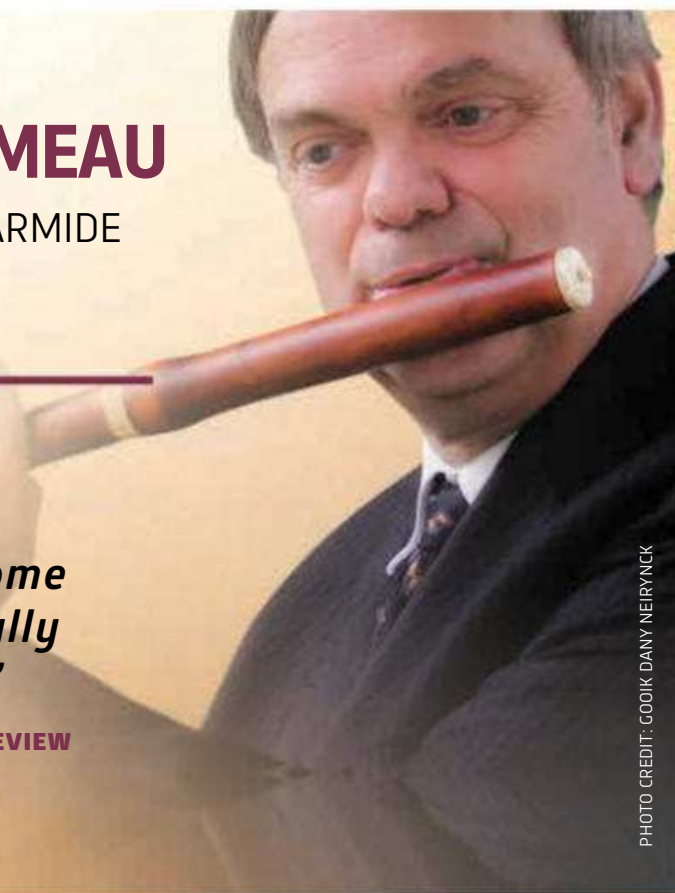


PHOTO CREDIT: COOK DANY NEIRYNCK



Power and blend: the National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic and David Alan Miller are convincing in works by John Harbison, Carl Ruggles and the late Steven Stucky

a cartoonist and inventor – and an illustration by Fritz Kahn of an electric eel-powered light bulb), although the finale, ‘Vulcan’s Forge’ relates to the iconic, logic-driven Mr Spock from *Star Trek*. Full of vividly scored music for soloist and orchestra, *Dreamachine* must be great fun to see live; on disc it seems, at 35 minutes, a touch overlong. (Compare it with Jennifer Higdon’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Percussion Concerto to hear the difference.) Nonetheless, Glennie plays it with her customary élan and there are worse ways to spend a half-hour-plus.

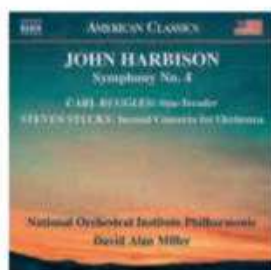
The flute concerto *Trail of Tears* (2010) – Daugherty’s third for the instrument – also has extramusical inspiration, ‘the forced removal of peoples from their homeland for political, economic, racial, religious, or cultural reasons’, specifically, the enforced trek of the Cherokee in winter 1838 – the ‘Trail of Tears’. The concerto ends, however, with a vibrant evocation of the Sun Dance, indicative of the tribe’s triumph over oppression. Amy Porter is in scintillating form in the solo role. So, too, is Carol Jantsch in Daugherty’s tuba concerto *Reflections on the Mississippi* (2013), a nature-poem in four movements, concise in length and highly evocative, as can be discerned from the section titles: ‘Mist’, ‘Fury’, ‘Prayer’ and ‘Steamboat’. The Albany Symphony accompany here, as throughout, superbly.

Guy Rickards

Harbison • Ruggles • Stucky

**Harbison Symphony No 4 Ruggles Sun-Treader
Stucky Second Concerto for Orchestra
National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic /
David Alan Miller**

Naxos American Classics (M) 8 559836 (65' • DDD)



This appears to be the second time on CD that David Alan Miller pairs John Harbison and the late Steven Stucky – composers who have little in common besides the ability to orchestrate with flair and confidence. Stucky’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Second Concerto makes most of its points through brilliant textural manipulation. The opening ‘Overture (with friends)’ features murmuring carpets of woodwind ostinatos that are punctuated by brass and percussion outbursts. Towards the end, playful brass polyphony gathers steam over sustained chords. The central Variations movement conveys more melodic direction, retaining much of the Overture’s chattering woodwind flourishes and rapid string-section work. The finale hovers between tonal and atonal and between rhythmic and amorphous, leaving Stucky’s boundless repertoire of dazzlingly generic orchestral effects to fend for themselves. While BIS’s recording with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra benefits from the authority of the composer’s supervision, I find Miller’s

faster tempos and wider degrees of inflection more convincing.

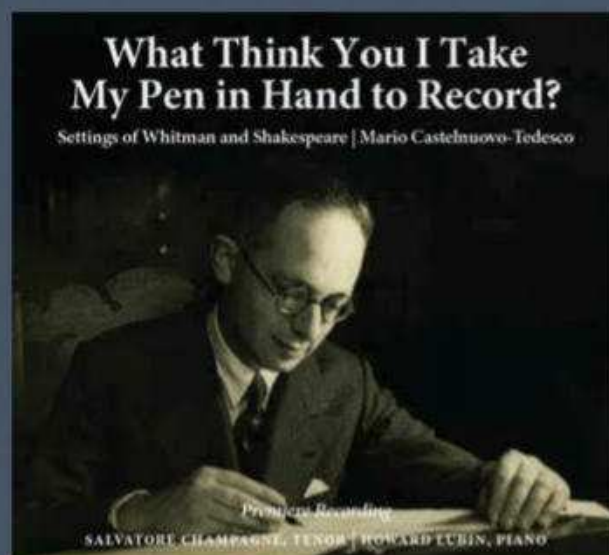
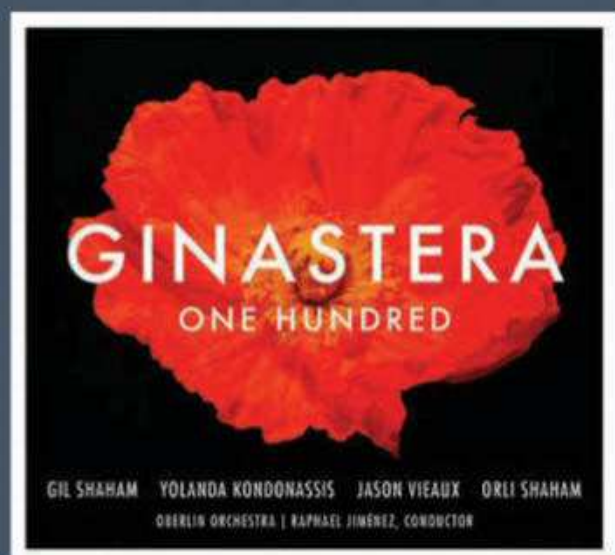
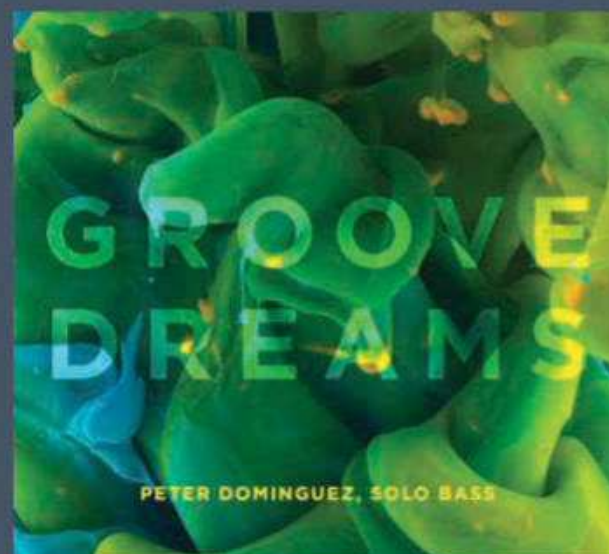
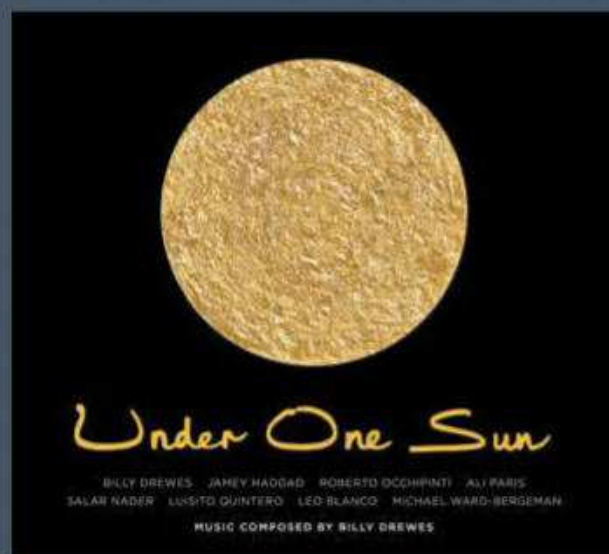
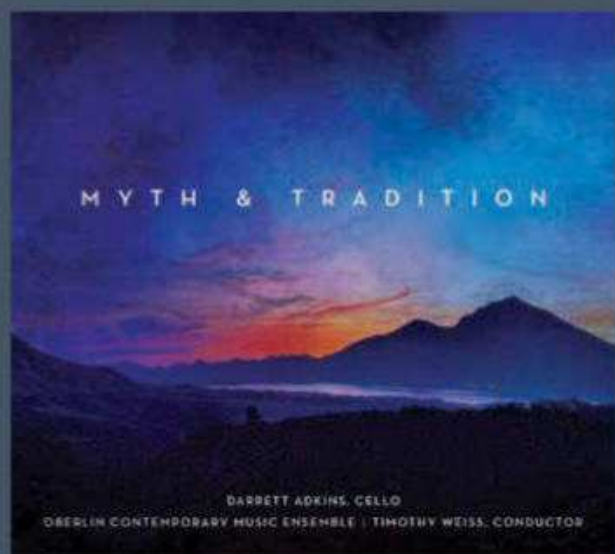
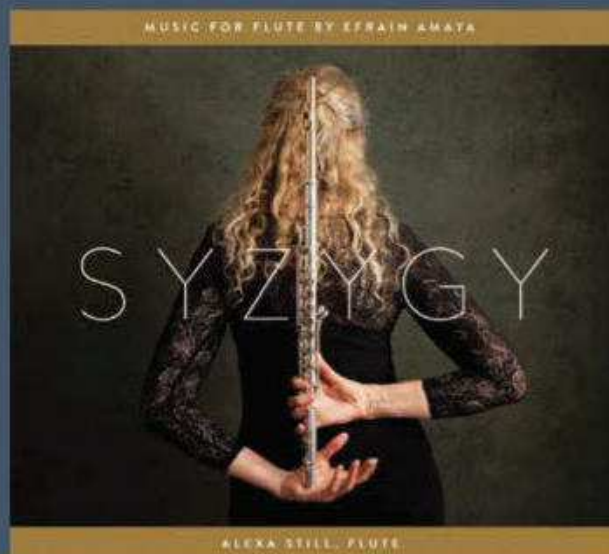
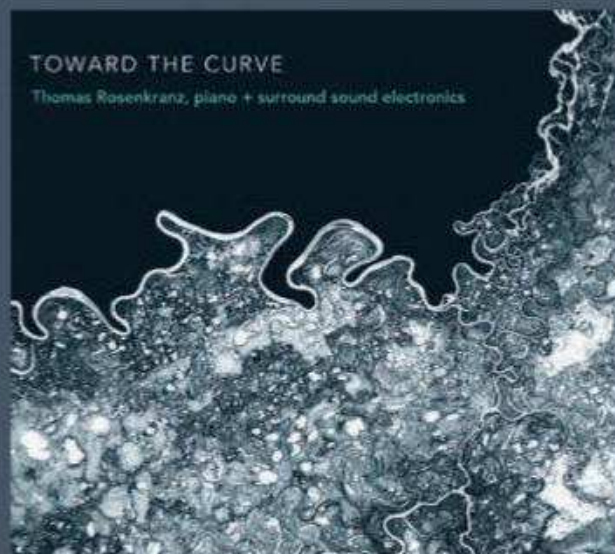
Harbison’s five-movement Fourth Symphony has a lot more to say. Contrary to the annotator, I don’t perceive the opening Fanfare as bombastic but rather playful and unpredictably jazzy. By contrast, the Intermezzo presents a back-and-forth discourse between sections of the orchestra, characterised by strategic silences, long resonances and expansive string solos. At first the central Scherzo’s syncopations seem to have been appropriated from the Copland/Bernstein playbook, yet Harbison’s voice ultimately governs the music’s dry wit and lightness of being. The Threnody’s sense of melodic tension and release proves quite harrowing. If the finale’s opening section and concluding dance seem more conventionally symphonic and less inventive by comparison, an arresting passage featuring mallet percussion more than compensates. One cannot fault the sheen and precision that Ludovic Morlot and the Boston Symphony brought to their live 2011 recording, yet the nod goes to Miller’s faster and shapelier treatment of the Scherzo and more variegated string phrasing in the Threnody.

For all of the undeniable power and focused blend that the remarkable young National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic musicians bring to Carl Ruggles’s *Sun-Treader*, I prefer the closer, more vivid detailing, clearer linear strands and more



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Donna Fairbanks and Lysa Rytting, as the Aurora Duo, make a strong case for the limited repertoire for violin and harp

assiduous transitions throughout the still sonically viable Tilson Thomas/Boston recording from the early 1970s. Still and all, this disc amounts to a major and highly recommendable achievement. **Jed Distler**

Harbison – comparative version:

Boston SO, Morlot (BSO) BSOCL1303

Ruggles – selected comparison:

Boston SO, Tilson Thomas (4/71^R, 1/91^R) (DG) ➔

463 633-2GOR or 477 7093GC

Stucky – comparative version:

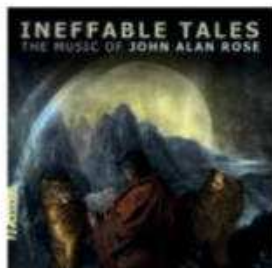
Singapore SO, Shui (10/10) (BIS) BIS-CD1622

JA Rose

'Ineffable Tales'

Piano Concerto, 'Tolkien Tale'^a. Old Father Time^b. 25,000 Years of Peace^c. Ticket to the Theater^d

^dSing Rose sop ^dTyler Bunch narr ^cMoni Simeonov vn ^bJungWon Choi vc ^aJohn Alan Rose pf Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra / Miran Vaupotić
Navona © NV6157 (74' • DDD)



John Alan Rose (b1972) is an American composer-pianist, not to be confused with the older British composers John Rose (b1928, a disc of whose string quartets and piano pieces is available on Divine Art) or John Luke Rose (b1933; performances can be found on YouTube). He performs in a duo with his soprano wife, the aptly named Sing Rose, featured here in the offbeat and light-hearted *Ticket to the Theater*. He is clearly a

capable pianist, with both sets of the Chopin Études in his repertoire, as can be heard from his virtuoso performance in the Piano Concerto (completed in 2011, I believe; the composer's website is not very helpful for details – no list of works, for instance).

The Piano Concerto is the main event, its 12-minute first movement inspired by *The Hobbit*. Rose writes in his notes that 'each chapter of the book' received 'equal musical treatment ... helping create the form and structure'. The tiny succeeding Lullaby (composed for his then newly born daughter) and overlong March, however, are not based on Tolkien, though continue in much the same character. The music has a winning charm, not unlike early Prokofiev, though little of Tolkien's high endeavour.

Both *Old Father Time* and *25,000 Years of Peace* are concertante works, the one for cello and the other for violin. Once again, the music smiles amiably throughout its discourse, though the latter wears a little thin towards the close. The performances are very fine – some fleeting edgy intonation from Moni Simeonov aside – particularly from the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra, and Navona's sound is first-rate. **Guy Rickards**

'Fantasie'

'Music for Violin & Harp'

Boren Movements from the Liturgical Dance
Donizetti Larghetto and Allegro (Sonata)
Hovhaness Sonata, Op 406 **Lasala** Poema del Pastor Coya **Saint-Saëns** Fantaisie, Op 124
Shaposhnikov Sonata

Aurora Duo (Donna Fairbanks vn Lysa Rytting hp)
MSR Classics © MS1682 (63' • DDD)
From 4Tay CD4010



The repertoire for violin and harp is small, but on this engaging disc – a reissue from 1998 – the Aurora Duo, namely violinist Donna Fairbanks and harpist Lysa Rytting, make the strongest case for this music. The works are so varied in colour and temperament that the possibility of monotony never rears its head.

The disc's title comes from Saint-Saëns's *Fantaisie*, Op 124, a lovely conversation in which violin and harp exist on an equal expressive footing. Many hallmarks of the composer's style – lyrical radiance, rhythmic agility, nuanced gradations – are here, and the Aurora musicians serve as resplendent champions of the score. As they do in the remaining fare. Donizetti's expert writing for harp in his operas, especially *Lucia di Lammermoor*, can also be discerned in his *Larghetto and Allegro*, in which the instruments engage in poetic and buoyant sentiments straight out of the *bel canto* aria handbook. The Russian composer Adrian Shaposhnikov (1888-1967) reveals debts to his teacher, Glazunov, in his rapturous Sonata in D minor, while Alan Hovhaness's five-movement Sonata, Op 406, almost floats on tender and wistful wings.

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More Mozart | Soloist: Jane Gower (bassoon)

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Sat 09.02.19
20:00

Great Chamber Music | Guest conductor: Jakob Lehmann

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Fri 08.03.19
20:00

Wolf, Mahler & Brahms | Soloist: Thomas Bauer (baritone)

A triptych in crescendo: selected songs with piano by Hugo Wolf, orchestral Lieder by Mahler and Brahms' *Symphony n°1*.



In *Poema del Pastor Coya*, the Argentine composer Ángel Lasala (1914-2000) pays affectionate tribute to South American music in three movements of vibrant personality. Five savoury selections from Murray Boren's *Movements from the Liturgical Dance* give Fairbanks and Rytting ample opportunity to interact with delicacy and fire. **Donald Rosenberg**

'if there were water'

GW Brown un/bodying/s

Minakakis Crossings Cycle

The Crossing / Donald Nally

Innova ⑤ INNOVA998 (53' • DDD • T)



The Crossing, a chamber choir based in Philadelphia, goes where other such ensembles might fear to tread. Led by Donald Nally, the group has commissioned more than 70 works, including the two hypnotic scores featured on this disc. Sung *a cappella*, Stratis Minakakis's *Crossings Cycle* and Gregory W Brown's *un/bodying/s* make use of a spectrum of vocal techniques placed at the service of texts that evoke myriad images while challenging the performers' artistic skills.

That the members of The Crossing rise to the occasion is not merely a given but also something of a phenomenon. Minakakis's elegiac cycle is set to ancient Greek verses by Homer, Sophocles and Euripides and lines from TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* (one of which gives the disc its title). Whatever the language, the Crossing singers sustain the hushed atmospheres and navigate the urgent and clamorous passages with consummate dexterity and control. The results are mesmerising, even after repeated hearings.

Brown's devotion to ecological issues lies at the heart of *un/bodying/s*, set to poems by Todd Hearon and focused on the Quabbin Reservoir in western Massachusetts. The four movements embrace a range of styles, at turns traditional – the opening 'The Meeting of the Waters' incorporates music by the early American composer Jeremiah Ingalls – and contemporary, mostly with accessible tonal roots. The writing is lively and affecting, full of exhilarating lines amid pungent details.

Nally shapes seamless performances of both works, drawing choral subtleties that illuminate the distinctive sound worlds conjured by two exceptionally imaginative composers. The disc is an engrossing

addition to The Crossing's growing catalogue of recordings. **Donald Rosenberg**

'Parts to Play'

Andres Violin Sonata^a **Daugherty** Viva

Ellin Three States at Play **Larsen** Blue Piece^a

Prokofiev Solo Violin Sonata, Op 115

Worthington Jilted Tango^a

Zaimont Grand Tarantella^a

Moonkyung Lee vn ^a**Martha Locker** pf

Navona ⑤ NV6165 (55' • DDD)



I decided to review Moonkyung Lee's mixed programme blind, listening and responding without knowing the composers' identities beforehand.

The opening sonata's first movement can be described as acerbic Kreisler but it seems as if the composer is tossing one idea after another at the wall to see what might stick. By contrast, the central movement is lyrical and melodically focused; but the finale's scampering themes and sudden harmonic detours ultimately reveal Prokofiev's hand.

The first work featuring both violin and piano begins like late Shostakovich minus the gloom. The central movement features lilting pizzicato arpeggios backing up melodies that one might describe as 'Copland-lite'. Ditto the *scherzando* finale's repeated-note gestures and dissonant jabs. Innocuous stuff; I've heard much better from Timo Andres. *Blue Piece*, on the other hand, is a mini-masterpiece laced with tangy harmonies and a heartfelt violin line that peaks in long chains of trills. Brava, Libby Larsen!

A terse and compact *Grand Tarantella* moves me the most when the music takes lyrical respite, where Judith Lang Zaimont relaxes and trusts her musical instincts. Whomever composed the *Jilted Tango* appears to deliberately restrict its material in order to get the most out of the least. It's an undemonstrative yet quirky, unpredictable piece by Rain Worthington that grows on you with each hearing. The unaccompanied *Viva* basically adds up to a Latino/blues/funk encore. Lee doesn't quite feel Michael Daugherty's syncopated syntax, although she and pianist Martha Locker generally play splendidly throughout this well-recorded recital.

Lee saves her most varied and concentrated execution for the collection's most substantial work. Although Bartók's influence permeates the concluding three-movement piece, the musical ideas

convey freshness, coherence and freedom from clichés. I especially like the middle movement: a haunting chorale that implies as much as it states. The work is by Benjamin Ellin, the only one of this collection's seven composers whose name I had not previously encountered. Excuse me while I peruse his website ... **Jed Distler**

'Statements'

'Choral Music from Yale University'

Hearne Consent **Lang** statement to the court^a

Lash Requiem^b

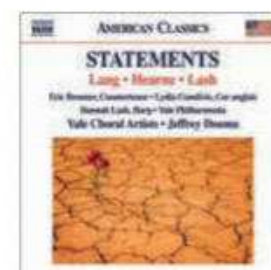
^b**Eric Brenner** countertenor ^b**Lydia Consilvio** cor ang

^b**Hannah Lash** hp **Yale Choral Artists**;

^{ab}**Yale Philharmonia / Jeffrey Douma**

Naxos American Classics ⑤ 8 559829

(58' • DDD • T)



For their Naxos debut, Jeffrey Douma and the Yale Choral Artists perform music by three

Yale composers that projects seriousness of intent and social responsibility. Each work is composed to stretch the musicians beyond singing the notes to identifying with the passion of the music, and of the words.

David Lang's powerful *statement to the court*, dedicated to the leadership of ASCAP's VP of Concert Music Fran Richards, uses a text by American labour leader Eugene Debs; sung *a cappella* at first, it is then broken gradually into variegated groups with piercingly beautiful solos by an unnamed solo soprano.

Ted Hearne's seven-minute *Consent*, written for the Yale choir to be paired with a performance of Tallis's motet *Loquebantur variis linguis*, sets his own love letters, Jewish and Catholic marriage contracts and evidence from the Steubenville Rape Trial of 2013 with disturbing consequences, as the four texts overlap and leave the listener horrified. It is sung with brilliant command and precise levels of volume and intensity.

Hannah Lash's 40-minute Requiem is a gentler, more lyrical, less doomsday-laden response to the existence of mortality. She immediately scores points by using her own 're-translation' from the Latin, the result merging text and music together in an inevitable flow. There are some hints of Britten here and there but Lash writes in her own language entirely, enchanting and enchanted. The instrumentalists play as beautifully as the singers sing – the composer plays the harp in the *Agnus Dei* – and countertenor Eric Brenner soars in his three big solos. **Laurence Vittes**

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Hindoyan · Michieletto / Beczala, Salsi, Radvanovsky

OPERA CONCERT VERSION

CANDIDE L. BERNSTEIN

OCTOBER 2018

DeMain / Appleby, Lewek, Soffel

HAMLET A. THOMAS

MARCH 2019

BARCELONA OBERTURA SPRING FESTIVAL

Oren / Álvarez, Testé, Damrau

AGRIPPINA G.F. HÄNDEL

MAY 2019

Emelyanychev / DiDonato, Fagioli

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FROM ASHUR TO SEVILLE

NOVEMBER 2018

ABU DHABI FESTIVAL

PIOTR BECZALA

NOVEMBER 2018

IRÉNE THEORIN

MARCH 2019

LE CONCERT D'ASTRÉE

APRIL 2019

THE "RING" WITHOUT WORDS

JULY 2019

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DON QUIJOTE

COMPAÑÍA NACIONAL
DE DANZA

SEPTEMBER 2019

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Thought-provoking links between art forms

I've written before about the links between musical genres. But when attending the unveiling of Japan's Praemium Imperiale Awards at London's Royal Academy of Art I was reminded how strongly they exist between different art forms too. Conductor Riccardo Muti received the music award, but prizes are also given in other fields, and I was struck by how, when an art form's specifics are stripped away, there are thought-provoking similarities. The sculpture recipient was Fujiko Nakaya, a Japanese artist famed for her fog sculptures. For her, part of the power of her work is the impermanence, the momentary nature of what we experience; how often have I heard musicians say the same? And in receiving the architecture prize, Christian de Portzamparc – whose buildings include Paris's Cité de la musique which integrates music, dance, sport and housing – talked of the challenge 'to solve within a unity, so many different aspects'. Isn't that the extraordinary aim of so much music?

There aren't many musicians who work across art forms – Alfred Brendel's poetry and Stephen Hough's painting and writing are just two examples that come to mind – though it's always fascinating when many of our My Music interviewees reflect on the relationship of their chosen discipline, be it writing, ceramics or architecture, to the structure of music. Centuries ago, great artists would indeed excel across disciplines; perhaps the intense specialism of the modern world makes that less likely today, but an openness to other fields and the way they often address the same challenges enhances artists and audiences alike.



On a completely different note, back in this space in the March issue I celebrated the concept of the traditional album, arguing that in the streaming age its programmatic approach, while rooted in the physical form, still had a power worth preserving. I'm thus delighted to see the launch of National Album Day in the UK (see page 8). This initiative promises to highlight the cultural resonance of something which will (certainly once) have defined the way most readers think of recording. Though far from implying that streaming is merely a tide to swim against – and regular readers will know my embrace of streaming couldn't be further from that! – it perhaps offers even greater creative freedom for the album format. By way of example, Richard Blackford's engaging new release *Niobe* is just 23 minutes long – 'which is only a problem if you want it to be' as Andrew Mellor rather unanswerably puts it in his review on page 55. And he's right. If a CD's size was, it is said, set to accommodate Beethoven's Ninth, it doesn't follow that all recorded programmes therefore need to fill a similar-size space. In many other genres – pop or jazz for example – the notion that a shorter album short-changes the listener has never really applied. So why should it in classical music, particularly when streaming renders the notion of 'value for money' rather obsolete anyway? (And in fact the CD of *Niobe* is sold at a price that reflects its length.) We've got used to experimentation with concert lengths – lunchtime or rush-hour recitals, late night Proms or even all-night epics – so why not be similarly creative when it comes to albums too?

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'There was extra resonance meeting Viktoria Mullova in Tallinn, on her first visit to the city since Soviet times,'

says **ANDREW MELLOR**, who writes about the violinist and her recording of the music of Arvo Pärt for this issue's cover story. 'Her story and the story of Estonia are truly woven together.'



'Taking over at the New York Philharmonic will be an enormous challenge,' writes **NEIL FISHER**, who interviews

Jaap van Zweden this month, though he notes 'the prime mover behind one of the most surprising accounts of Wagner's Ring Cycle undertaken this century – in Hong Kong – exudes a can-do creativity.'



'There must be several PhDs waiting to be written about the instruments and music of antiquity,' writes

HANNAH NEPIL who explores Delphian's fascinating European Music Archaeology Project for us this month. 'I've never learnt so much from working on a feature.'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • David Allen • Nalen Anthony • Tim Ashley • Mike Ashman • Michelle Assay • Richard Bratby • Edward Breen • Liam Cagney • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Andrew Farach-Colton • Iain Fenlon • Neil Fisher • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Charlotte Gardner • David Gutman • Christian Hoskins • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Richard Lawrence • Andrew Mellor • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Hannah Nepil • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Mark Pullinger • Peter Quantrell • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Patrick Rucker • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



BERNSTEIN
Symphonies Nos 1-3;
Prelude, Fugue and
Riffs
**Sols; Accademia
Nazionale di
Santa Cecilia /
Sir Antonio Pappano**
Warner Classics
► **EDWARD
SECKERSON'S
REVIEW IS ON
PAGE 50**

Pappano's knowledge of, and seeming instinct for, Bernstein's sound world, rhythms and references, is hugely engaging – an excellent modern way of marking the composer's centenary.



SHOSTAKOVICH
Symphonies Nos 4 & 11
**Boston Symphony
Orchestra /
Andris Nelsons**
DG

'The excellence continues,' writes Edward Seckerson of this next instalment in Nelsons's Shostakovich cycle: and so it does, dramatically, powerfully so.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



FIRSOVA
'Fantasy'
Alissa Firsova pf
Tippett Quartet et al
Vivat
Beautifully crafted

works – all of which reveal an innate understanding of different instrumental voices – reflect a creative mind from which we look forward to hearing more.

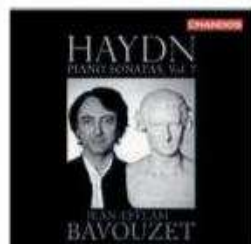
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 73**



JS BACH
Suites for lute
Thomas Dunford archlute
Alpha
Performances rich in elegance and

personality are wrapped in an acoustic of calming warmth, all of which makes for a wonderful journey through these Bach arrangements.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 80**



HAYDN
Piano Sonatas, Vol 7
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet pf
Chandos
What more to say that hasn't been said about

Volumes 1-6 of this hugely enjoyable Haydn sonata series? Playing of grace and playfulness, all bursting with affection for this music – a superb series continues.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 84**



LISZT
Scherzo und March.
Ballades. Légends
Leonardo Pierdomenico
pf
Piano Classics

A truly impressive debut from this Italian pianist: well-chosen works, to which he brings compelling colour and mood, as well as – of course – thrilling virtuosity.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



RACHMANINOV
Études-tableaux
Steven Osborne pf
Hyperion
This remarkable pianist talked

Gramophone readers though the score last month, whetting our appetite for a performance of deeply reflective individuality: he doesn't disappoint.

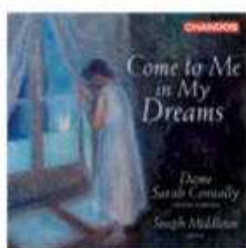
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



BUXTEHUDE
'Abendmusiken'
**Vox Luminis /
Lionel Meunier**
Alpha
Another wonderful

recording from our 2012 Recording of the Year winners, the blend, beauty of line and sense of atmosphere and drama making for a riveting listen.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 92**



**'COME TO ME
IN MY DREAMS'**
'120 years of song from
the Royal College of Music'
**Dame Sarah Connolly mez /
Joseph Middleton pf**
Chandos

As communicative as always, Connolly celebrates, in this programme, song composers associated with the RCM.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 100**



HALÉVY
La reine de Chypre
**Sols; Flemish Radio Choir;
Paris Chamber Orchestra /
Hervé Niquet**
Ediciones Singulares

A less familiar opera – but what delightful advocacy it gets here! Characterful singing from a superb cast, all shaped perfectly by Niquet.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 105**



DVD/BLU-RAY
WEINBERG The Passenger
**Sols; Yekaterinburg Opera and Ballet Theatre /
Oliver von Dohnányi**
Dux

A film of an opera dealing with one of history's most horrific events, taken from the Russian stage premiere of this powerful and important work.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 110**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
MOZART
'Mozart Live 1978'
**Norman; Brendel; Academy
of St Martin in the Fields /
Neville Marriner**
Decca Eloquence

A fine celebration of music – and of Mozart!

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 59**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD

Sergei Babayan signs for Deutsche Grammophon

Pianist Sergei Babayan has signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon. The announcement follows a recent appearance on the Yellow Label with Martha Argerich: 'Prokofiev for Two' featured Babayan's transcriptions of music from Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* and other works by the composer. As David Fanning said in his review in our June issue, 'virtually all come off so well in Sergei Babayan's two-piano arrangements that it is hard to imagine the composer being anything but delighted.' Back in October Babayan also appeared on DG alongside his most celebrated pupil, Daniil Trifonov, whom he partnered in Chopin's Rondo for two pianos.

Babayan's forthcoming DG releases will see the 57-year-old Armenian-American pair Mozart piano sonatas with pieces from different periods, followed by recordings of Bach and Rachmaninov. DG added that 'the pianist's plans will also reflect his profound knowledge of



Sergei Babayan looks to the future with DG

rarely heard repertoire, commitment to works by contemporary composers and skills as composer and arranger'.

'I was first introduced to Deutsche Grammophon when I was 14 through Martha Argerich's recording of Chopin's E minor Concerto,' said Babayan. 'That formed me as a musician and to this day continues to be one of my guiding lights. To be a Deutsche Grammophon artist myself today is, for me, the highest possible privilege.'

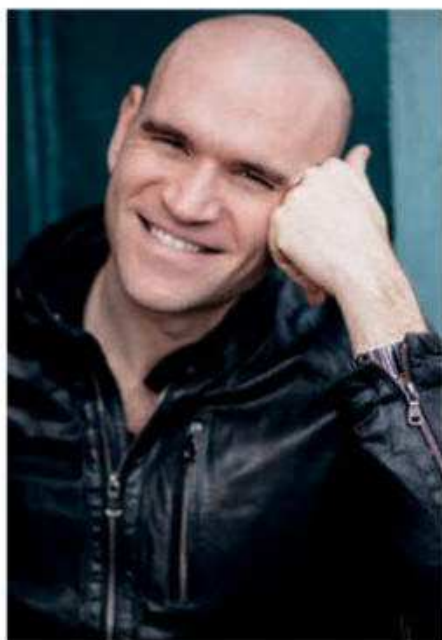
This is in many ways an unusual signing for DG, although it follows on from their new relationship with Grigory Sokolov, another established pianist without a major label but with a reputation among connoisseurs. Rather than nurturing another young talent at the outset their career, DG is giving overdue recognition to an imaginative artist who has been known primarily for his association with starker names. Babayan's pianism, belatedly perhaps, will now be able to shine in his own right.

Going Dutch: tenor Michael Fabiano joins Pentatone

Michael Fabiano will begin a partnership with the Pentatone label with a disc of Verdi and Donizetti arias.

The American tenor, who has signed what is described as a 'long-term, exclusive deal' with the Dutch label, has been gracing some of the world's leading stages – including Covent Garden and the New York Met – in recent years, building on the success of having been, in 2014, awarded both the prestigious Beverly Sills Artist Award and the Richard Tucker Award, two prizes given to exceptionally promising young artists.

The tenor featured in *Gramophone's* One to Watch column in 2011, though since then his name has appeared in our pages primarily in DVD reviews (Donizetti's *Lucretia Borgia* with Renée Fleming on EuroArts, and the composer's *Poliuto* on Opus Arte) or in sections devoted to live music-making. The deal with Pentatone, which promises to 'showcase the breadth of his repertoire over several albums', should change that. He'll be joined for his initial aria album by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Enrique Mazzola.



Fabiano: recording Verdi and Donizetti

UK music industry launches National Album Day

The UK music industry has launched a new celebration of the album. While the increase in the popularity of streaming shows no signs of slowing, the way people listen online doesn't always reflect the power of a well-programmed, thought-through record, of the type associated with physical formats of the past and present, from the LP up until the CD.

'National Album Day' – to be held on October 13 – aims to address that, though signs that the format remains meaningful to a digital generation are in fact encouraging. A survey in May by the Entertainment Retailers Association (ERA) – joint organisers of the event with the UK record industry body, the BPI – showed that 55 per cent of those aged 25 or below said they had listened to an album in the previous week.

The organisers cite the first album as Nathan Milstein's recording of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, issued by Columbia in 1948 – thus National Album Day marks 70 years of the format. This was certainly the first 12-inch LP – a format which came to define what many think of as an album, and indeed one seeing something of a resurgence in recent years.

The BBC is the official broadcast partner, and radio stations including Radio 3 will be supporting the event – involving artists from all genres of music. Then, at 3.33(r)pm on October 13, the British public are invited to play their favourite record.



The first LP: Nathan Milstein

Celebrating conductors on Medici.tv

Bruckner takes centre stage this month with our 'Gramophone Selects' on **medici.tv**. Claudio Abbado conducts the Lucerne Festival Orchestra in the great Fifth Symphony, Klaus Tennstedt joins the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1977 for the Seventh and, going back into the archive, William Steinberg conducts the same orchestra in the Eighth, a 1962 performance caught on the wing at Harvard University. Three obviously male conductors, so for our documentary choice we've opted for 'Maestras: The Long Journey of Women to the Podium', a fascinating glimpse into some of the women making in-roads into a traditionally men-only profession (Sylvia Caduff, Barbara Hannigan, Marin Alsop, Anu Tali and Konstantia Gourzi take to the podium). Our Young Artist this month is the violinist Alexandra Conunova, recently a *Gramophone* 'One to Watch' – catch her in recital at this year's Verbier Festival. Dispensing wisdom in a masterclass is Sir András Schiff, guiding piano pupils of the Juilliard School through some



Barbara Hannigan: profiled in our documentary choice

classics. And for two performances, back to back, of the same work we've chosen Schumann's *Kreisleriana* – Eliso Virsaladze and Nicholas Angelich take charge.

To find out more, visit **medici.tv** and type 'Gramophone selects' into the 'Search here' box.

ONE TO WATCH

Peter Moore Trombone

For many music lovers Peter Moore won't be a new name. Who can forget his lyricism and composure when he became the youngest-ever winner of BBC Young Musician in 2008, at the age of 12? His musicianship and precocious talent were already abundantly clear. Like the best musicians whose gifts are recognised at a young age, he largely receded from public view to complete his education – he studied at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester – and hone his craft. At the age of 18 he was appointed co-principal trombone of the LSO, becoming its youngest member, and now the still fresh-faced 22-year-old's debut album, 'Life Force', is issued on Rubicon Classics (see review on page 76). This album is a showcase for his talent and a celebration of music that has played a key role in his artistic development, and for which he has a special affection.

Peter Moore joined the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist scheme in 2015. His solo career continues to evolve alongside his orchestral work, and in November he gives



the UK premiere of Sir James MacMillan's Trombone Concerto with the LSO and Gianandrea Noseda at the Barbican.

Future recording plans are still taking shape, but at some point we should expect a return to Moore's brass-band roots: as he puts it, 'there are some astonishingly beautiful tunes that the rest of the world needs to hear!'

GRAMOPHONE Online

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Awards shortlist digital magazine

On page 32 we reveal which three recordings in each category have been shortlisted for *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards. We have produced (in association with Presto Classical) a free



digital magazine featuring the full original reviews of the six recordings in each category from which this shortlist was drawn. The digital magazine can be read either via the *Gramophone* app or on the Exact Editions website. Visit **gramophone.co.uk/awards** for further information.

Podcasts

Our *Gramophone* podcast series continues with Stephen Hough discussing his 'Dream Album' with *Gramophone*'s Editor Martin Cullingford. The album was described by Jeremy Nicholas in his review in the July issue as 'a portrait of an artist in love with music of all sorts, of a master transcriber and of that rare animal, a concert pianist who is not afraid to mix high jinks with high art.' Visit **gramophone.co.uk** to enjoy this and many other podcasts.

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Remembering Oliver Knussen, 1952–2018

Richard Whitehouse pays tribute to a towering figure in contemporary music

The death of Oliver Knussen at the age of 66 represents an irreplaceable loss to music-making, whether in the UK, Europe or the USA. Bouts of illness had dogged him over recent years, but his appetite for composing, conducting and discussing music remained undimmed – testament to a belief in music’s communicative potency, which constantly motivated his activities.

His high-profile debut as a composer – conducting the London Symphony Orchestra in the premiere of his First Symphony when he was only 15 – led to widespread public interest but also a critical backlash in certain quarters, the latter persisting throughout his formative years and doubtless contributing to that acute self-criticism which informed his composing thereafter. His published output may run to little more than three dozen pieces, but its intrinsic quality ensured a degree of acceptance not to be taken for granted in the context of post-war music.

Most of those works have been recorded, in performances directed or overseen by Knussen himself: those encountering, for the first time, the double-bill of operas to libretti by Maurice Sendak, or the discs of orchestral and ensemble pieces (see below) are unlikely to regret it. In recent years, the composer had expressed the hope of ratcheting up his acknowledged output to 50 works, and it remains to be seen whether some of those in progress when he died are sufficiently advanced to warrant their posthumous realisation (these include a Fourth Symphony, which had long been promised, a piano concerto for Peter Serkin, and a *Symphonic Adagio* for the Philadelphia Orchestra; the orchestral sequence *Cleveland Portraits* had already been tried out in rehearsal).

To many listeners, however, Knussen was as well or even better known for his activities as a conductor. Having grown up, as it were, in the midst of the orchestra (his father, Stuart, was for many years principal double bass of the LSO), he was ideally placed to understand its workings and so apply these to his own music and that of others. From early in his career he worked regularly with the Nash Ensemble and London Sinfonietta, being Music Director of the latter from 1998 to 2002, and he was later associated with Britten Sinfonia. He was Principal Guest Conductor of the Residentie Orchestra in The Hague from 1992 to 1996, and also enjoyed long-term relationships with Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Initially his involvement centred on contemporary scores, but in time the emphasis broadened to take in music from the 19th and earlier 20th centuries.

Knussen made several recordings with Virgin Classics – including the first complete account of Britten’s ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas* (7/90). Subsequently he had an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, with which he recorded a broad repertoire that included late works by Stravinsky, the ballet *Undine* by Henze, Carter’s *Symphonia* (winner in the Contemporary category at the 2000 *Gramophone* Awards), selections by Takemitsu and Lieberon (both of whose deaths affected him deeply) and a collection of orchestrations by Leopold Stokowski. Unlike many of his peers, he had a wide knowledge of classical recording and took naturally to the studio, even though his fastidiousness mirrored that shown as a composer; there were several major projects – not least Schoenberg’s opera *Von heute auf morgen*, the orchestral *Elegies* of Busoni and miscellaneous pieces by Mauricio



Oliver Knussen: an irreplaceable loss to contemporary music

Kagel – that still await commercial release. Hopefully this will now become possible, along with the works recorded live in concert: a few instances might include his lithe and cohesive take on Schumann’s *Rhenish* Symphony, the explosive Tenth Symphony of Myaskovsky and a startling rethink of Elgar’s *Falstaff*, which typified his fidelity to the score as well as his recreative approach in terms of interpretation. A recent (and characteristic) concert from Helsinki, in which he conducts Busoni, Brahms and his own Horn Concerto, can be viewed at [arte.tv](https://www.artetv.com).

Knussen played a crucial role at summer courses at the Tanglewood Institute in the 1970s and ’80s and at the Aldeburgh Festival, where he was Co-Artistic Director from 1983 to 1998. The inspiration he provided as teacher and mentor to successive generations of composers cannot be gainsaid, with many already having attested to the belief he instilled in them – and often at a crucial juncture in their development. Not that Knussen would have taken the credit for this; rather, he was content to pass on his own experiences of a European cultural tradition whose evolution he saw as unpredictable and often frustrating but always evolving. We might regret those aspects of his legacy that appear incomplete or only partially realised, while being grateful for the extent of that legacy which will doubtless serve as an exemplar for decades to come. **G**

KEY RECORDING

Knussen as conductor and composer



Knussen: Symphonies Nos 2 and 3

Nash Ensemble; London Sinfonietta / Knussen;
Philharmonia / Tilson Thomas

NMC (1/13)

Classic accounts that confirmed Knussen’s reputation in the 1970s. The Second Symphony ranks among the finest of any teenage works, while the Third is a benchmark for future symphonic writing.

ARTISTS & *their* INSTRUMENTS

Joseph Nolan on the organ of St Bavo, Haarlem

“It’s an astonishing organ. When it was completed it was the largest organ in the world, with 60 stops and 32-foot pedal towers. Mozart played it when he was 10 in 1766, Handel played it, Mendelssohn played it – it is extraordinary.

It’s a Christian Muller organ, built between 1735 and 1738. Obviously there have been quite a few changes over the years when additions have been made or the organ has been made more practical to play, but there is no getting away from the fact that you are playing something incredibly special. They are so proud of it, they really look after the instrument.

The space is just astonishing – you have to be there to believe it. You walk into the cathedral, and there’s this incredible ornate organ. The acoustic is obviously immense. So is the atmosphere that surrounds the organ, its history – there are not many organs where you can feel someone great has actually sat there. You feel that very strongly at St Bavo.

I recorded the Reubke Sonata on the 94th Psalm on this instrument because, so far as we know, nobody has actually recorded this piece on it – and I can tell you, when all the manuals are coupled it’s like depressing bricks – it’s incredibly heavy, and the physical element of playing a piece like this is huge. But I think one of the biggest reasons



I wanted to record the work there is the unique clarity of the sound. It’s very similar in some ways to the organ that Reubke would have performed this work on in Merseburg Cathedral.

The acoustic is so boomy, but our sound engineer Mike Hatch, whom I believe to be an absolute genius, captures both the sense of space and the instrument’s essential clarity



and detail, and for me that’s what’s really special about this recording.

This is an organ that physically shows you how to play. You can’t play too fast, you’re made to play at the right tempo – that’s the wonderful thing about mechanical action: you can actually control the speech of the air that comes through the pipe. And I think in the Reubke sonata this forces you to play at the right tempo because otherwise the organ will effectively just say ‘no’ to you.

You sit at the organ and you suddenly realise that all the stops are such a long way away from you. Especially in the Reubke sonata I had to have someone either side of me pulling them because it’s physically impossible to reach them!”

Joseph Nolan’s recording on the organ of St Bavo, Haarlem, for Signum will be reviewed next issue

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GRAMOPHONE GUIDE TO *Operetta*

Richard Bratby surveys a form that can mean different things to different people

If you could pin operetta down, it wouldn't be operetta. 'Little opera' is really far too general a term to describe a genre that – at its broadest – embraces both *Die Zauberflöte* and *Les Misérables*. Operetta has many ancestors (Mozart called *Zaide* an 'operetta'). But it's widely agreed that classical operetta unites song, dance and spoken words in order to amuse, delight and ideally sell tickets. And that its Golden Age began when Jacques Offenbach – a German immigrant to France, of Jewish descent – found a Second Empire audience that was ready to laugh, and premiered *Orphée aux enfers* in Paris in October 1858.

Offenbach's most brilliant operettas – *La belle Hélène*, *La vie parisienne* – went around the world. They were unignorable: Offenbach himself supposedly told Johann Strauss II that 'you should be writing operettas!', and to the lilt of a waltz Viennese operetta was born. Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* (1874) and *Der Zigeunerbaron* found competition from Franz von Suppé, a distant relative of Donizetti: *Boccaccio* has an almost Italianate lyricism. In Britain, meanwhile, Gilbert and Sullivan's unbroken run of 11 masterpieces from *Trial by Jury* (1875) to *The Gondoliers* (1889) remains unsurpassed by any operetta partnership.

As this first generation left the stage, composers of the so-called Silver Age created a new sound. In Vienna, the former infantry bandmaster Franz Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe* (1905) set the template for a more sentimental, luxurious entertainment: it became a global smash. Emmerich Kálmán added a dash of



Lehár's *The Merry Widow* remains one of the most popular of all operettas

Hungarian paprika in *Die Csárdásfürstin*, while in Paris and London André Messager (*Véronique*), Edward German (*Merrie England*) and Lionel Monckton (*The Arcadians*) found a graceful vein of nostalgia. After the Great War, operetta confronted the challenges of cinema, jazz and American musical comedy. Responses varied: Benatzky and Stolz's *Im weissen Rössl* went for spectacle, Ivor Novello faced the grand sweep of history in *The Dancing Years*, and from *Paganini* to *Giuditta* Lehár wrote a series of star vehicles for the tenor Richard Tauber, telling stories not of cheerful escapism but of displacement and heartbreak.

There's a feeling in these works of a vanishing world, and Nazism killed operetta's multicultural roots in Central Europe. But a glance across the Atlantic tells a happier story. In 1943 Rodgers and Hammerstein premiered *Oklahoma!* and the American musical came into its operetta heritage. *Carousel* even opens with a waltz. A generation on, Bernstein's *Candide*, Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady* and Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* all sound unmistakably like operetta. And after all, where there's laughter, there's musical life. **G**

► Listen to our Operetta playlist on Qobuz

IN THE STUDIO

● It has been a busy time for record label Harmonia Mundi recently, with multiple recording sessions taking place across Europe. In June, there were two notable recordings: **Bruno Philippe** was in Provence with Jérôme Ducros to record works for cello and piano by Rachmaninov and Myaskovsky; and **Isabelle Faust** was joined once again by Alexander Melnikov at Berlin's Teldex Studio for their second volume of Mozart violin sonatas. The recordings are due for release next year, in spring and autumn respectively. Last month, meanwhile, **Nikolai Lugansky** was recording Debussy works for solo piano at the Kulturzentrum Gustav Mahler in the Dolomites, Italy; the album, to include the *Suite bergamasque* and *Deux Arabesques*, is due for release this October. And this month, **Alexander Melnikov** returns to Berlin to record Prokofiev's piano sonatas, due for release next spring, plus there is a huge undertaking from **Les Arts Florissants** and William Christie: their multi-discipline performance of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* at the Salzburg Festival is being recorded for release on CD and DVD/Blu-ray next autumn.

● From July 17 to 25, the **Tana Quartet** were in Paris recording Philip Glass's seven string quartets. The release on October 21 on Megadisc will be marked with a launch event at the Musée d'Art et

d'Histoire du Judaïsme, at which one quartet will be performed every hour. The recording will be available on CD (two discs) and vinyl.

● The young Korean cellist **Hee-Young Lim** was at Abbey Road Studios last month recording several works for cello and orchestra. Lim, who recently became the first Korean (and youngest) professor to be appointed to Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music, was previously principal cellist of the Rotterdam Philharmonic. She was joined on this recording, which took place on July 2-4, by the London Symphony Orchestra under Scott Yoo, with Michael Fine producing. Repertoire included the First Cello Concertos of Saint-Saëns and Milhaud, Lalo's Cello Concerto, Offenbach's *Les Larmes de Jacqueline* and an arrangement of 'Méditation' from Massenet's *Thaïs*. The record label is still to be confirmed, but an autumn release date is planned.

● Horn player **Felix Klieser** will be at the Mozarteum Salzburg next month to record all four of Mozart's horn concertos. Klieser, who was born without arms and plays the horn with his feet, will be joined by the Camerata Salzburg on September 21-24 for the recording on Berlin Classics. It is due for release in March next year, and will be available on CD and vinyl as well as digitally.

ORCHESTRA *Insight ...*

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An orchestra formed in the image of a passionate surfer? Only in Australia. The Australian Chamber Orchestra has become synonymous with Richard Tognetti, the determined violinist (and board-rider) who became its Artistic Director in 1990. The sometime pupil of viola player William Primrose set about instilling a revitalising, breezy energy in the ACO that would lead some to hail it as the finest chamber orchestra in the world.

Initially, the 23-year-old put some noses out of joint with his quest to 'clean up the sludge' in performances of Baroque and Classical repertoire. Tognetti was insistent that significant differentiations in character – the natural products of contrasting musical personalities and epochs – should distinguish interpretations from composer to composer. The world soon got wind of his work. Soloists wanted to travel down under to work with the ACO while New York, London, Amsterdam and Vienna wanted to tempt it north. Audiences in those cities were soon hearing an ensemble characterised by a tightness, crispness and focus that only made its frequent vivacity more endearing.

The ACO has spent the ensuing decades exploring repertoire from the Antipodes to the Baltics with Bach and Mozart as foundation stones. It has brought us recordings on Sony Classical, Chandos, Hyperion, BIS and ABC Classics. Much of the music it plays is transcribed (quartets by Beethoven, Schubert, Haas, Szymanowski, Janáček and Grieg as well as intriguing renderings of assorted violin and cello sonatas); much was written to order (by Sculthorpe, Vasks, Dean, Mazzoli) and much has been prompted by collaborations with non-musicians (filmmakers, actors, cabaret artists). The ideals of its founder



John Painter, to nurture Australian music life from the roots up, remain: in 2016, the training orchestra ACO2 was born.

The ACO's membership is now truly international, its programming characterised by in-depth relationships with choice soloists from Dawn Upshaw to Steven Isserlis. Its readiness to switch between period-specific and modern instruments, sometimes during the course of a concert (imaginative programming often necessitates it) underlines its respect for technique. But musicality and communication always come first.

Gramophone's one-time description of the ensemble as 'strong-minded but approachable' remains as true as ever. The ACO has built up an impressive collection of priceless instruments, most recently taking possession of the 1726 Belgiozno Stradivarius. But its collective string sound, and judicious use of vibrato, feels very much of our time. Some find it wearing and conceited. Most, though, find it invigorating and highly cultivated – a breath of fresh, coastal air. **Andrew Mellor**

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Egarr steps down

The Academy of Ancient Music has announced that Music Director Richard Egarr (above) will step down after the 2021/22 season, after 15 years in the post. His time at the helm – the conductor and harpsichordist took over from AAM founder Christopher

Hogwood in 2006 – has been well represented on disc, in recent years on the AAM's own label, including releases of both Bach Passions and a disc of the composer's orchestral suites.

New King's Singers

The King's Singers – arguably the most successful a cappella group of their type – have announced a change in their line-up. Joining the sextet in January will be countertenor Edward Button and bass-baritone Nick Ashby, succeeding Timothy Wayne-Wright and Christopher Gabbittas respectively.

Muti honoured

Riccardo Muti has received a Praemium Imperiale Award, given annually by the Japan

Art Association in recognition of those 'who have made a major international impact in their particular field'. There are also awards for Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Music and Theatre/Film. The conductor receives ¥15m (c£100,000).

Opera Rara deal

Opera Rara, committed champions of neglected operatic gems, and Warner Classics have struck a distribution partnership, which will see the major label take on the worldwide distribution for all future Opera Rara recordings – beginning with Rossini's *Semiramide* under the organisation's Artistic Director Sir Mark Elder – and selected recordings from the catalogue.

FROM WHERE I SIT

How do you get a great musician to open up to an enquiring journalist? Edward Seckerson explains all



Reflecting back over my years in journalism my thoughts turned recently to interviews (that key component of a journalist's armoury) and the sheer volume of opportunities that had come my way over the years both in print and, more recently, in public. Extraordinary names sprang to mind: Dorati, Kubelík, Giulini, Bernstein, Janet Baker, Paul McCartney, Julie Andrews ...


Circumstances and locations were also often extraordinary: Mstislav Rostropovich in his Paris apartment crammed so full of Russian artefacts that one might easily have imagined he and Galina Vishnevskaya loading removal vans outside the Winter Palace on their exit from the Motherland. I remember the phone kept ringing: 'Yeltsin', repeated Slava with a certain relish. Then there was Klaus Tennstedt in his high-rise penthouse overlooking Kiel harbour during a raging storm where coffee and stollen cake provided refuge both from the storm and a high-powered discussion about Mahler.

But what is less often discussed is the technique deployed in interviewing – markedly different in private (with one's discreet recording device) for a written piece than it is behind microphones and/or cameras or, even more exposing, the live audience format. So what is the key to a successful encounter? What turns a serviceable Q&A into a stimulating conversation?

One word: preparation. If it's music it's the detail that moves conversations to another level, that initiates lively debate. Specifics and musical substance quickly demonstrate that you the interviewer have been listening and, better yet, have an understanding of their interpretative process. And even if you don't entirely agree with their choices, a mutual respect and trust has been established.

With Vladimir Jurowski and Riccardo Chailly I have dug deeper and uncovered more about their approach to, say, Mahler, and they have listened to my viewpoint as intently as I have listened to theirs. Likewise Vasily Petrenko on Shostakovich. With Bernstein, his own music was the key to unlocking him. With Julie Andrews it was quite simply the desire to talk of things other than *The Sound of Music*.

Public interviews are something else. The interviewer is as much 'on stage' as the performer. It's a performance art – one in which my years as a professional actor have proved invaluable. In recent times subjects have ranged from Dame Janet Baker (unforgettable) and Sir Thomas Allen (you haven't lived until you've seen his audition for Karajan acted out like a scene from *Meistersinger*) to Vladimir Ashkenazy (good jokes) and Antonio Pappano (exceptional jazz piano).

One final anecdote recalling the great Carlo Maria Giulini. During an interview at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam where we were discussing Dvořák, I singled out his recording of the Seventh Symphony with the London Philharmonic only to have him deny having made it. Slowly but surely I persuaded him that it did indeed exist whereupon he gently pushed the recording device towards me and said: 'I think I should interview you.' 

OPUS ARTE

NEW RELEASES



IL TROVATORE VERDI Royal Opera House

German director David Bösch, celebrated for his theatrical productions for Munich and Frankfurt among others, makes his UK debut with this new production for The Royal Opera. The opera's themes of jealousy, revenge and love play out against a hauntingly beautiful, wintry landscape that has been riven by war.

DVD | BLU-RAY



HAMLET DEAN Glyndebourne

Brett Dean's colourful, energetic, witty and richly lyrical music expertly captures the modernity of Shakespeare's timeless tale, while also exploiting the traditional operatic elements of arias, ensembles and choruses. The artists include Allan Clayton, Sarah Connolly and Barbara Hannigan, conducted by Vladimir Jurowski.

DVD | BLU-RAY



THE DA PONTE OPERAS MOZART Royal Opera House

Così fan tutte stars a cast of young rising stars, Kasper Holten's production of *Don Giovanni* stars Mariusz Kwiecien, Erwin Schrott, Miah Persson and Gerald Finley, while David McVicar's production of *Le nozze di Figaro* is one of the world's most beloved operas.

3 DVD SET | 3 BLU-RAY SET



FREDERICK ASHTON THE DREAM SYMPHONIC VARIATIONS MARGUERITE AND ARMAND Royal Opera House

Three contrasting ballets by The Royal Ballet's Founder Choreographer Frederick Ashton. Includes *Marguerite and Armand*, danced by former Royal Ballet Principal Zaida Yanowsky and guest artist Roberto Bolle. Conducted by Emmanuel Plasson.

DVD | BLU-RAY

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Searching for musical freedom

In applying her trademark steel and passion to Arvo Pärt's measured simplicity, Viktoria Mullova has found hidden depths in his music – perhaps because, like Pärt, this violinist knows what it is to experience Soviet repression, writes **Andrew Mellor**

The Estonia Concert Hall in Tallinn is typical of its kind: a classical (in this case, neo-classical) shoebox with a wrap-around upper gallery on three sides that makes way for the stage and organ at one end. But, as in the opera house that occupies the same building – the largest single structure in Estonia when it was inaugurated in 1913 – there is one rather beautiful twist. The velvet that sits like icing on top of the concert hall's balcony front, just like that which lines the opera house's boxes and circles, is not an ostentatious red but a deep, introverted blue.

It is the blue of Estonia's flag, of course; the white of the walls and the black of the seat frames complete the tricolore. In that sense, it is also the blue of stoicism, of patience, and of hope lined with pain. It is the blue of hesitance but also the blue of unabashed dignity and cautious pride. The velvet might well resemble a steady chant, threaded through resounding white walls of silence. Arvo Pärt's music must have been played countless times in plush auditoria of red, gold and mahogany. But listening to it here, in this architectural meeting of monastic purity with unerring resolve, the very thought seems ridiculous.

On the hall's compact stage, Viktoria Mullova and Florian Donderer are recording Pärt's *Tabula rasa* with around 25 members of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra. Paavo Järvi is on the podium, and Pärt himself is shuttling between the control room and the auditorium holding a Post-it note covered in handwritten notes.

For music of such simplicity – or perhaps because of it – there is an awful lot to discuss and a very high margin for wobbles, noises off and textural collapse. 'It's the transparency that makes it difficult to record,' says Mullova. 'Normally if you touch another string or make a sound with your bow, you don't hear it. In this music, the microphones will pick up everything.' Particularly so in the section now recording, from *Tabula rasa*'s second movement, 'Silentium'. Here, it is as if Pärt's sounds hardly dare trespass upon those white walls of silence.

The composer is on stage talking to individual string players in Estonian, apparently dealing with bow strokes and emphasising the difference between

the *p* and *ppp* markings that alternate, note by note, in the low strings. To Mullova, he speaks frequently and in Russian, singing occasionally. To Donderer, on leave from his regular duties as concertmaster of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen and the Estonian Festival Orchestra, he speaks German. When Järvi addresses the soloists, it's in English. It can feel as though this cacophony of verbal communication between takes is being raised on purpose, as if to prompt a natural swing back to stilled focus when the assembled musicians pick up their instruments to play.

Either way, Mullova – who is on the receiving end of the majority of the circulating opinions – remains



Meeting of minds and hearts: Arvo Pärt with Viktoria Mullova in Tallinn

largely calm but occasionally pointed in her responses. 'Sometimes what you want, what actually comes out and what other people hear are all very different,' she tells me after the second day of sessions is finished, across the road at one of Tallinn's many new altitudinous, glass-fronted hotels. 'You need to go around and listen to the takes, and to listen to other people. That's how you change things. I couldn't find the right sound for the start of *Fratres* [two pages of unaccompanied arpeggio figurations] so I tried different ways of using the bow, though not necessarily different bowings. There was one Arvo liked that he hadn't encountered before. If you can find a new way of doing something and the composer can help, that's fantastic.'

As interesting as it is to hear Mullova in this repertoire, in a sense we get only what is to be expected: strength and

depth of tone, purposeful and clear articulation (particularly in *Fratres*, which follows after the first morning break), a certain eagerness (now and then the producer pulls her up on it over the loudspeaker) but an overall solidity that is audible as much from her instrument as it is visible from her characteristic motionless stance when playing. Her performances of both *Tabula rasa* and *Fratres* are markedly slower than the classic accounts from Gil Shaham under Järvi senior. But they are also more direct and emotive – angry, even – to a point that you might not expect the music could take. Apparently, it absolutely can.

Long before Mullova had played any Pärt on her Stradivarius, she was listening to the composer's choral works on the 12 speakers of her Tesla's sound system (she devours recorded music while driving). 'I have goose-bumps when I hear it,' she says. 'His choral music is so powerful. I listened a lot to *De profundis* – a very dark piece.' In 2015, she was invited by Paavo Järvi to participate in the Orchestre de Paris's celebration of the composer's 80th birthday, when she played *Tabula rasa*, *Fratres* and the *Passacaglia*. 'I met Arvo at the Philharmonie de Paris. He came to all the rehearsals,' Mullova recalls. 'I really enjoyed playing the music and Paavo is one of my very favourite people to collaborate with. That's why we decided to record it.'

But there is a deeper connection, too. As a teenager in the 1970s, Mullova's first venture outside Russia was right here, to Soviet-controlled Tallinn. She returned a few times that decade, but this is her first time back in the city since she defected from the Soviet Union in 1983, and since Estonia gained its independence eight years later after decades of economic and social repression under communism. 'I stayed in *that* hotel', Mullova says, pointing across the road at the Sokos Viru. 'I checked the name, "Virus". It was the only Western hotel at the time, built by the Finns. I even remember

what the room looked like. I can't tell you how exciting it was – my first time in a different country, hearing a different language. I was here with my professor's violin class and I am pretty sure we performed in the hall we're recording in now.'

Mullova's residual bitterness towards the Soviet Union – both political and musical (she still shudders at the mention of her teacher Leonid Kogan's name) – is well documented. But experiencing, first hand, the anger she unleashes in the first double-stopped section of *Fratres*, it's hard not to read her interpretation as an act of solidarity with the long-suffering Estonians. 'I actually wonder if I have any Baltic blood in me,' she says when we discuss the collective experience of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and even Finland ('a country I feel very connected to') and the musical fruits born of their respective Russian occupations. She describes Pärt's works as carrying 'a lot of pain', a comment that echoes the composer's own description of his music as 'works of suffering'. But, she says, she actually asked Pärt if he holds politics or national imagery in his mind when composing. 'He said he doesn't. It's just what he hears.' So she followed up by asking where those ideas come from, and how he harbours them and transforms them into music. 'He just said, "It's all mathematics. And love." Which makes sense.'



Violinist and composer with the conductor Paavo Järvi (left, main picture; centre, inset). Despite the high level of concentration, there are still moments of humour

Mullova cuts an evocative figure on the Estonia Concert Hall's stage, despite her comparative lack of movement while playing. She is dressed simply but highly appropriately, in a white shirt-dress with streaks of primitive patterning in deep blue, and folksy leather ankle boots. For all her here-and-now optimism and enjoyment of life, post-defection, her eyes, both close up and far away, barely conceal the not-quite-forgotten misery and sure determination that this very hall has witnessed courtesy of Estonia's recourse to music in times of anguish.

'The interesting thing about these countries around the Baltic Sea is that you get a lot more than you see on the surface,' she says. 'The people might seem cold and cool but underneath they are very, very emotional. They cry easily.' Does that bear any relation to the music of Pärt – or to that of the Latvian Pēteris Vasks, whose violin concerto *Distant Light* she is soon to add to her repertoire? 'Certainly in terms of the sorts of emotions and the musical clarity,' she says. 'Both Pärt and Vasks can do so much with so little and that is the reason they are so popular. Their works speak to people who don't generally listen to classical music.'

'When I recorded the Vivaldi concertos, Giovanni Antonini said to me, "It's good that people know you struggled with this"'

She describes the major chord that comes at the end of Pärt's *Passacaglia*. 'You have the mathematics that he [Pärt] described in the final passage of music, and then you have a silence, and then you have this major chord. It's just a major chord. But it tears your insides. I can feel it in my body.' We discuss the silence that comes before it, and the even heavier silence that is scored in at the end of *Tabula rasa* (a whole four and a half bars with a general pause appended to each). 'There's a reason that silence is written there,' she says. 'It's not just waiting.'

Capturing that silence – bottling it and encasing it within the plastic of a compact disc or the bits of an MP3 – is the dichotomy of recording distilled to its very essence. The more tangible difficulties in Pärt's music come, says Mullova, in its consistency. She maintains that it is 'not difficult to play technically' (some violinists might disagree, but not all enjoy the benefits of Mullova's hard-core training) but explains that 'it becomes difficult because you stay for a long time on very, very high notes. It's very hard to sustain – you feel like you are dying. But it's good to *hear* that it's difficult. If it's too easy then it becomes too clean, like it's played by a computer.'

The big developments in Mullova's career since she was routinely associated with a fulsome, rock steady, deep-brown sound have been her embracing of historically informed performance techniques and tools, of gypsy music and of South American improvisatory styles. This, she says, has been vital for the preservation of humanity in her playing. 'What is dangerous now is that anything can be played in tune. You just adjust it with a machine, and that is the death of art,' she says. 'I believe that when something is difficult, that difficulty is an important element of the music itself. When I made my first recording for Onyx, Vivaldi concertos with Il Giardino Armonico, I remember Giovanni [Antonini] saying "It's good to hear the difficulty, that people know you struggled".'

South American and gypsy music may have sated Mullova's thirst for musical freedom. In that sense, Pärt can look like an odd repertoire move following those sojourns and her rip-roaring recording of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata with



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the fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout. How much freedom is there, really, in Pärt's measured mathematics and provocative simplicity? How much room for human expression is there in his music derived from hymn and chant, which sails steadily along as if controlled by what Pärt has described as 'the wing-beat of time'? Mullova draws another comparison with machines. 'There is always freedom, because otherwise you would just play it electronically,' she says. 'You can decide, okay: this is the speed of the bow; this is the pressure. What is important is to feel that there is a person playing it.'

Her performance of Pärt's *Passacaglia* the next day proves an interesting case study in the wake of those comments. Mullova's is, in some ways, a fiery interpretation of this brief, compartmentalised piece. But it is a fire that benefits from a certain rigidity, as the solo violin part mutates from quavers, into triplets and then into semi-quavers. The emotive qualities in her interpretation come not from playing fast and loose with the notes or with Pärt's 'mathematics', but instead from her particular use of the bow, often at the heel. In response, Paavo Järvi stops the orchestra – numbering rather more than for *Tabula rasa* the day before – and urges its strings to dig deeper into the oom-pah gestures that form the short piece's structural turning point.

It's hard to imagine a violinist other than Mullova playing that particular passage with such a combination of steel, passion and perfection – Mullova trademarks if ever there were any. It seems obvious that however much she might wish to disown her roots in the Russian School, the lessons learned are still paying dividends. Are they, in fact, allowing her to pursue even greater freedoms? 'You can only be imaginative, and develop taste and interpretation, when you have your basic technique right,' she concurs. 'If you can't play scales then you can't be free to create music. I find there are people in the West, even people with careers, who lack this technique. I can see the lack of technical ability.'

The scars of Mullova's nationality and training still run deep, despite her reconnection with her father in Siberia shortly before his death in 2010 and her subsequent visits to his family. In her very first interview with *Gramophone*, published in January 1987, she was already distancing herself from the Tchaikovsky concerto (it is no longer in her repertoire). Apart from that, there was little sign of the huge relief and tinge of guilt she felt to be out of Soviet Russia. 'I have really horrible memories of Moscow,' she admits. 'I was very isolated, I didn't have any friends. All I remember from that time is practice, practice, practice – and fear. Fear of every situation I found myself in. Fear of playing, fear of competitions, fear of Leonid Kogan who was so scary for me. That's why I didn't want to reconnect to it.'



Mullova is able to reconcile her personal response to this music with the composer's

'Perfection is very boring. You hear some young players now and their technique is fantastic. But the humanity is lost'

Hungarian gypsy tradition to the Austro-Hungarian tradition.' The observation speaks volumes about the stylistic DNA of Mullova's own playing.

But still, she fears a cult of perfection that she believes shows few signs of dissipating. 'Perfection is very boring,' she says. 'You hear some young players now – amazing violinists and pianists – and their technique is just fantastic; they've practised long hours and achieved incredible things and in some instances become famous. But sometimes I feel it's just too easy for them. The humanity has become lost. And it's not just pianists and violinists

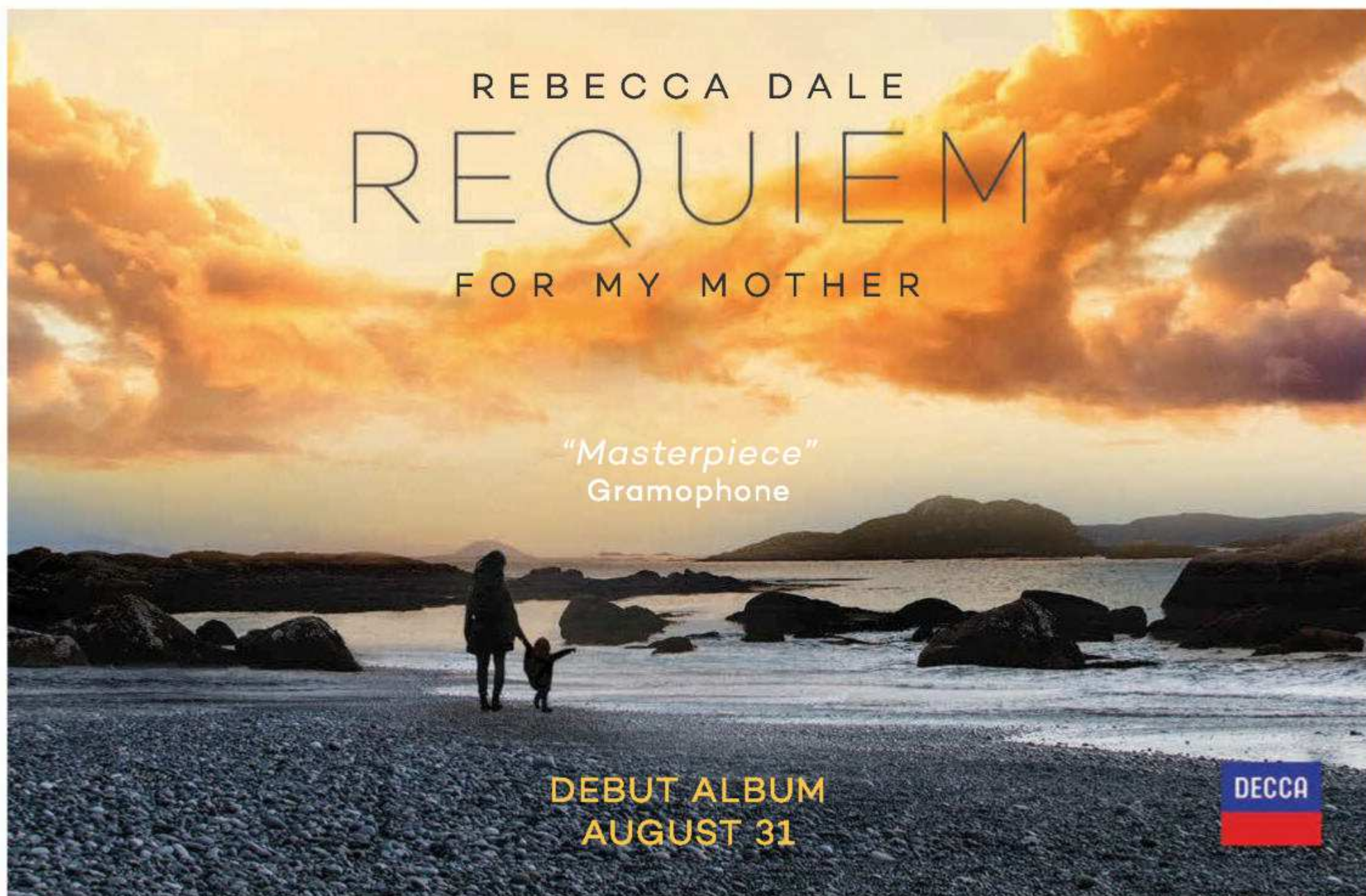
either. It's everyone – even ballet dancers.'

Back at the sessions, the assembled party has been working on the five minutes of Pärt's *Passacaglia* for well over an hour. Mullova is at the back of the stage now, discussing the timbre of the percussionist's marimba sticks. The orchestra's leader Arvo Leibur is on his feet too, analysing bowings with the viola section. The level of detail to which all are working on this music, with its astonishingly low rate of notes per page, is remarkable. Even more so is Mullova's reconciliation of her personal response to Pärt's music with the composer's own constant interjections.

With all this discussion and dissection, I worry that the musicians will soon lose sight of the wood for the trees. But over time, when the complex alchemy of musical opinion gives way to humans breathing and playing together, the piece appears to drift into its own space – to find its own equilibrium that suits this room, these people and this particular moment in time; the reason anybody re-records anything. The notes on the page remain as fixed as the velvet-lined balcony and sturdy organ case of the hall. But in this evermore hectic world – not least for Estonia, now spoken of so often as the start-up powerhouse of Europe, cradle of the minds that brought us Skype and TransferWise – the slower but more resolved approach that these musicians have found in Pärt's music seems to me an appropriate counterpoint. They appear to have found an accord.

But just to check, I call Viktoria Mullova a couple of days later to gauge the progress of the sessions that happened after I left. 'It was very good,' she says. 'They say they have never seen Pärt so happy.'

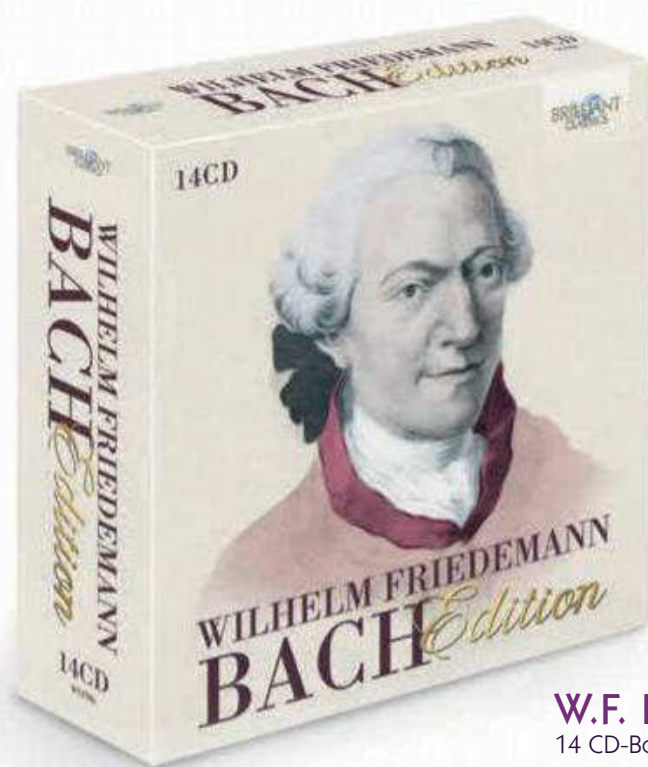
Mullova's recording of Pärt on *Onyx* will be reviewed next issue



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Carving out his future

Conductor Jaap van Zweden exceeded expectations with his Asian Ring cycle – can he do the same when he takes the helm at the New York Philharmonic? **Neil Fisher** visits the Dutchman in Hong Kong and encounters a bold, pragmatic musician who seems ready for the challenge

Leonard Bernstein was the one who pushed Jaap van Zweden off the diving board. The Dutch violinist had a gold-plated job in orchestral music as the concertmaster of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Then Bernstein, on a tour with the orchestra in Berlin, asked van Zweden to take the rehearsal in the first movement of Mahler's Symphony No 1 so that he could 'do the hall' – check the acoustic and the balance. The Dutchman tried to protest. 'I said, "Lenny, I've never conducted",' he recounts. 'He said, "Yeah, I know – just do it". And to say no to him was dangerous.'

It was not exactly a 'star is born' moment. Bernstein's comment on van Zweden's conducting debut was: 'That was pretty disastrous.' Yet he also told him: 'I think you should take it seriously – I see something there.' Van Zweden waited a few years, 'but his words started to live more in my life'. He decided to take the plunge and swap the violin for the baton permanently. His father was aghast, arguing that his son had a great job and one that came with a great pension at that. 'I said, "Look dad, I'm not born for a pension". This was my moment to take a chance.'

The symmetry this September is satisfying. Van Zweden is taking up the position of Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, America's most venerable orchestra, the oldest of the 'big five', and he is following in the footsteps of one Leonard Bernstein. What's more, it is Bernstein's anniversary year: the composer-conductor is being feted for his contributions to music theatre, symphonic music, education and, of course, some towering interpretations of big chunks of the repertoire.

Bernstein remains a touchstone for New Yorkers – even though he was not universally admired during his tenure in the 1950s and '60s. He did, however, make the Philharmonic a central fixture of the New York cultural scene. Today the Philharmonic appears somewhat rudderless, hampered by a problematic hall – the refurbishment of which has just been drastically scaled back – and an ageing subscriber base. Classical music is not keeping up in the battle to entertain the city's public and grab their dollars. Other US orchestras – including Johnny-come-latelys such as the LA Philharmonic and the Minnesota Orchestra – are creating more waves nationally and internationally. By stepping into the New York bearpit, the 57-year-old van Zweden is taking a risk, and the orchestra is taking a risk on him. Will it pay off?

To try to find out, I've travelled thousands of miles in the opposite direction to New York. Since 2012 van Zweden has been the Music Director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic, a job he initially combined with being Music Director of the

Dallas Symphony Orchestra (ahead of starting in New York, he stood down from the Texas orchestra in May). Brought into the Hong Kong Phil to raise standards, his flagship project has been a *Ring* cycle, the first to be played by a Hong Kong or mainland Chinese orchestra, with each opera performed in concert a year apart, all recorded by Naxos (the label is based on the island). I was there for *Das Rheingold* in 2015 and returned to see Siegfried bumped off, Valhalla burnt down and the Rhinemaidens frolic once more in *Götterdämmerung* in January this year. This fourth and final instalment will be released in November, alongside a box-set of the complete cycle. The orchestra, good in *Das Rheingold*, if working desperately hard, sounded transformed in *Götterdämmerung*. 'It's made me really proud to have been on this journey,' says van Zweden.

'The orchestra has changed dramatically because of this *Ring*. One of the most important things they've learnt with this music, more than anything else, is that you cannot just focus on your

own part. You need to know what the other players are doing.'

This was also van Zweden's first *Ring*, so it was a journey that conductor and orchestra were taking together. 'I had done *Lohengrin*, *Parsifal*, *Tristan*, *Meistersinger*, but the *Ring* is so different from all the other operas of Wagner. It needs a different technique because it's darker than the other ones. Especially with *Götterdämmerung*, which demands an incredible "shape" from the orchestra.' He is talking about unanimity of ensemble but also elasticity. 'For instance there isn't one bar in the same tempo, so you really need to know what the singers are singing *about*, why they are going forwards, why they are holding back. The flexibility of the orchestra with this opera is needed more than in any opera of Wagner.'

What is the message of the *Ring*? Does van Zweden dare to distill it? 'There's one sentence in *Götterdämmerung* when Hagen talks about power ... and I think that says it all. It's about power. All the time. Who is on top of who.'

Van Zweden is thought of as a tough taskmaster in rehearsal, even a disciplinarian. Some musicians in the Dallas Symphony Orchestra complained of being 'brow-beaten excessively' by their Music Director but there was no doubt that he brought renewed vigour to the orchestra, as shown on record in powerful recordings of Mahler's Third and Sixth symphonies.

In Hong Kong the *Ring* was partly a challenge to the players, van Zweden says. 'The *Ring* was necessary for the orchestra. I thought it could change the orchestra tremendously and it did. And with the same people there! There is not one single new

Bernstein's comment on van Zweden's conducting debut was: 'That was pretty disastrous – but I see something there'



player since *Das Rheingold*, and that's an achievement. It's very easy for a Music Director and an orchestra to just replace its weaker elements, but that's not why we are here. We are here to be a family and to make each other better and that's what we did. And the people who were not as strong four years ago as they are now should celebrate that. Because everybody is on a top level and I am not afraid to say that this orchestra can be compared to any top German or American orchestra.'

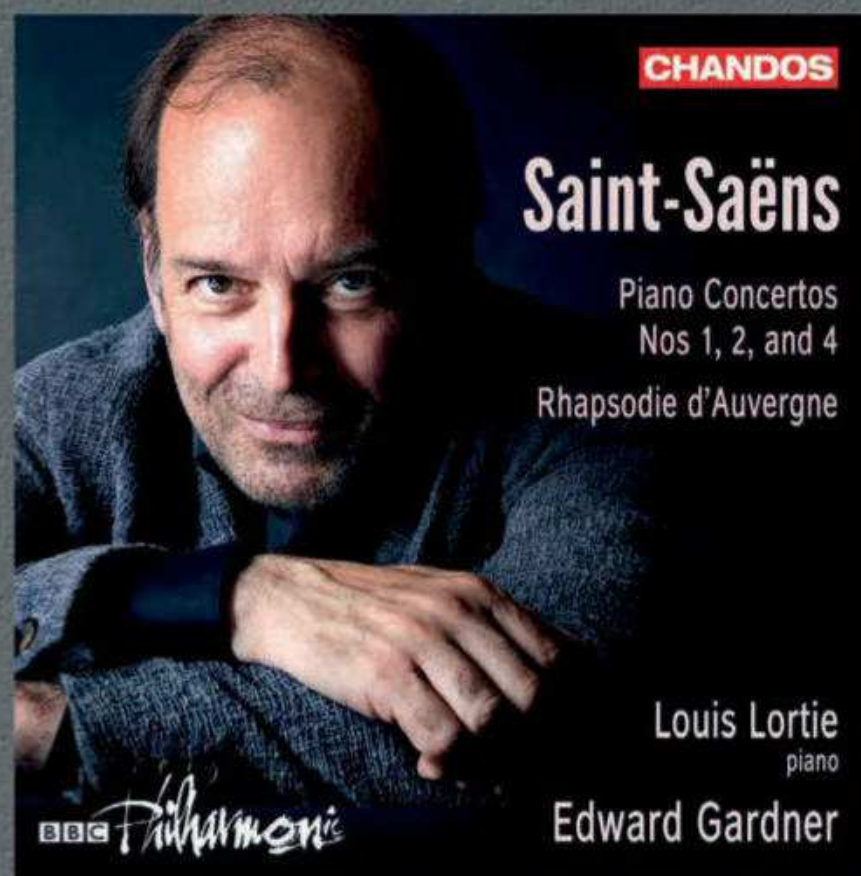
That's a bold statement, but tested against a frequently electrifying, vividly played *Götterdämmerung*, it's not one that's been idly uttered. The only real quirkiness of this Asian *Ring* cycle has come in the multiple castings of key characters, who have – due to administrative rather than artistic reasons – changed from opera to opera. That said, what's been lost in continuity has been made up for in thrilling contrasts: the

third Brünnhilde fielded by the HK Phil, Gun-Brit Barkmin in *Götterdämmerung*, had never sung the part before but was fearless and exciting. Matthias Goerne's Wotan – one of the few singers who remained on board throughout the cycle – is also a collector's item, if an unusually introspective take on the part.

I ask van Zweden about the different challenge of inspiring his 'other' orchestra, the Dallas Symphony. He replies instead with an anecdote about the New York Phil, one that illustrates the dangers of looking back to a performing tradition, of resting on one's laurels. 'In one of my first weeks with the Philharmonic we did Mahler 1 and the orchestra were talking to me about the tradition of the bowings of Lenny [Bernstein]. And I said to them, 'How interesting!' Because these are not the bowings I remember from playing in the Concertgebouw

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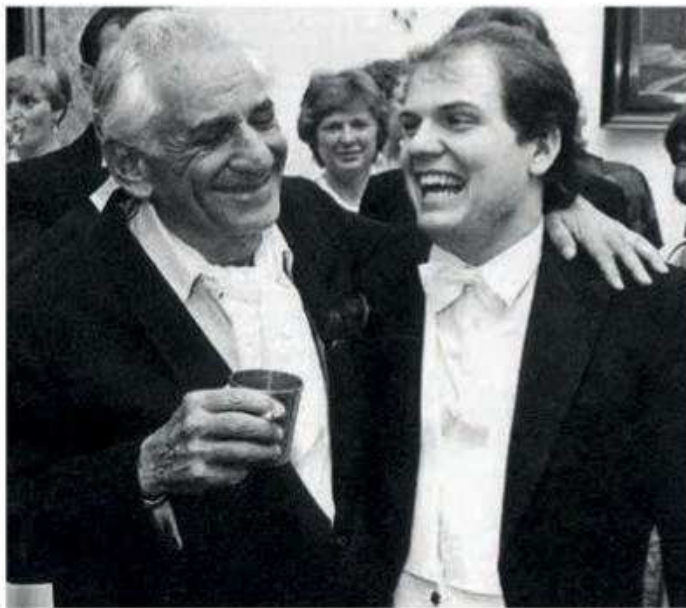
when Lenny was conducting Mahler 1. So a tradition changes every day, and every time a new conductor comes in, but you don't notice it.'

It's hard not to think of the words of another New York Philharmonic Music Director, Gustav Mahler: 'Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire.' Van Zweden agrees, referencing two of the greatest ensembles in the world. 'I don't know any orchestra that works so hard as the Concertgebouw or the Berlin Philharmonic to keep their traditions alive.'

His relationship with the New York Philharmonic is based more on chemistry and results than sharing a lofty vision, he suggests. I put it to him, as has been floated, that the orchestra doesn't like big 'talkers'. He chews it over. 'I think the Philharmonic likes instinct, absolutely ... but at the same time it's a very intellectual orchestra, with a huge, powerful knowledge on their shoulders. But talking a lot is really only possible when you have 10 rehearsals like Harnoncourt would have with the Concertgebouw.'

These rehearsals came with scholarly lectures – 'fascinating' – but at the cost of technical preparation: 'The concert came and we were shaking in our chairs because we did not know how he was going to conduct us,' he recalls. The lesson is: 'When you talk a lot, it's dangerous not to be ready.'

So van Zweden is a doer and a pragmatic one at that. His most frequent appearances in *Gramophone* early on in his conducting career were in reviews of his complete survey of



Van Zweden with Bernstein, who persuaded him to conduct

the Bruckner symphonies with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic: quite a way of immersing oneself in a new career. 'Well, when you start to conduct at the age of 38, you have to learn some new music and I didn't want to make the mistake of waiting for certain pieces.' Plus, he did know these symphonies – but as a concertmaster, playing under the baton of Eugen Jochum, Bernard Haitink and Riccardo Chailly. The results, as many *Gramophone* critics have noted, have a refreshing clarity, even a kind of levity in the multiple orchestral textures, which van Zweden acknowledges. 'I love

the details in Bruckner more than the big lines – we all know the big lines, but what is it that's behind them? And if you would say what kind of man I am, I am a man of details. There for me is the real treasure.'

Back to the mission awaiting him in Manhattan. He seizes

on a salient problem when it comes to beefing up the New York Phil's standing: there are plenty more orchestras poised to grab the attention.

New Yorkers have regular opportunities to grade their home band at David Geffen Hall (formerly Avery Fisher) against touring ensembles rolling in and out of Carnegie Hall. 'Every week there is a world-famous orchestra,' he points out, 'whether it's Berlin, the Concertgebouw, the LSO, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland ... they're all coming in and playing really prepared programmes. It's not the Olympics but people always like to compare, so the pressure is there.'

'We were shaking – we didn't know how Harnoncourt would conduct. When you talk a lot, it's dangerous not to be ready'



Jaap van Zweden puts the Hong Kong Philharmonic through their paces in *Götterdämmerung*, the final instalment in their Ring cycle which has been recorded for Naxos



Van Zweden conducts the New York Phil at David Geffen Hall in 2016

Leadership is one way to beat off the competition. Not just his own, but from the Philharmonic's new President, Deborah Borda, a New Yorker who was transformative at the LA Philharmonic and was wooed back, van Zweden says, partly through a direct approach from him. 'It was not easy to get her but I had to do it.' That her first big decision was to put the brakes on a \$500m total renovation of David Geffen Hall was a necessary climb-down, he argues, because

'To be criticised in New York feels normal. But if I read something which I think is right, I can take that with me'

fundraising for the redevelopment would have come at the cost of donations to the orchestra, leaving the Philharmonic 'on its knees'. Perhaps because he has had years playing in the dry, box-like Hong Kong Cultural Centre, he is also much more enthusiastic than others about the Geffen Hall. Plenty can still be changed there, he argues, without a gut renovation. 'And I think the really great orchestras should create their own acoustic.'

Van Zweden has been unfavourably contrasted with his predecessor at the New York Phil, Alan Gilbert, when it



Conducting the New York Phil and soloists Simon O'Neill and Heidi Melton in Die Walküre in February this year


comes to his appetite for contemporary music. Not only is this unfair, he says, but contemporary music is 'one of my real pillars for the New York Philharmonic in the years to come'. It's also there in his own track record, he says. 'I was at the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic for six years and the key job was presenting new music.'

When he began the 2017-18 season in New York (as Music Director Designate) he programmed Philip Glass's Concerto for Two Pianos, the first time that Glass's music had been played by the orchestra. 'The New York critics were already criticising me about not doing enough new music. Then I got to New York and saw that Philip Glass, 80 years old, had never been played in New York by the Philharmonic! How is that possible? They have an icon living their own city, never been played. So I said, "Enough".'

His first season as Music Director kicks off this September with a new work by Ashley Fure: she's a 30-something experimental composer who rarely sticks to the script, so this is quite a statement of intent. Perhaps understandably, van Zweden speaks more confidently about a new concert work by his compatriot Louis Andriessen, *Agamemnon*, which he was also instrumental in commissioning. 'He's not very keen on writing for large orchestras so it was a challenge to get him to write for us ... he's such an inspiring guy for a generation of musicians and audiences.' A post-minimalist bridge connects Andriessen to another composer, the New Yorker David Lang, whose opera *prisoner of the state* is a contemporary take on Beethoven's *Fidelio*. 'He's finishing it now. I asked if I could hear some of it, and I was completely mesmerised by what I heard. I can't wait to start work on it.' There are three other world premieres, including works by another Manhattanite, Julia Wolfe, and a piece by the prodigious 24-year-old Conrad Tao, who has already clocked up premieres for van Zweden in Dallas and Hong Kong. 'I'm more and more intrigued by this young man, he's an amazing talent.'

The New Yorker's music critic, Alex Ross, assessing the all but impossible brief awaiting any Music Director of the New York Phil, was pithy about the predicament: 'No matter who is in charge, a cadre of skeptics, including a fair number of the players, will believe that someone else could do better.' At least van Zweden is going into the job with his eyes wide open – and a rather humble philosophy. 'To be criticised in New York feels completely normal,' he says. 'We all raved when Lenny

Bernstein came to the Concertgebouw about his Mahler symphonies, but when you look back many actually said, "Oh it was over-exaggerated, self-indulgent, bla bla bla". Then there was Boulez [Bernstein's successor in New York] who was more strict, and then they said, "Yeah, it was boring". So there's always something. But if I read something about my concerts which I think is right, and that I can take with me for the next performance, then it means I can actually learn something. Because I think I can always learn.'

And will he know when he has made a difference – how will he gauge success? 'In the end', he replies, 'being a good or great conductor is not so difficult. It's much more difficult to be a good father for your orchestra. And the players need to feel your respect every day.' 

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John Kenny plays a specially reconstructed Tintignac carnyx on the shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea, Tarquinia, Italy

Blowing the dust off OUR MUSICAL PAST

Delphian's final disc with the European Music Archaeology Project taps into the most authentic ancient sound world yet, revealing even more about our musical forbears, writes **Hannah Nepil**

'Sorry?' I'm trying to concentrate on what is effectively an advanced theoretical lecture on ancient Greek musical modes, but it's proving difficult. That's not because of any shortcoming on the part of my teacher, Huddersfield University Music Professor Rupert Till. Rather, it's because I'm simultaneously being regaled with the drone of the aulos – a deceptively small, double piped, ancient Greek reed instrument that, at its loudest, can drown out a modern-day highland bagpipe.

We are sat in the studio at the University of Huddersfield, where Delphian is currently recording its new disc of ancient

Greek music and instruments. This is only day two in the recording schedule. But it's also the tail end of a much longer project. Due out in late September, 'Apollo and Dionysus: Sounds from Classical Antiquity' will be the fifth and final instalment of a CD series that aims to explore music from our distant past. Volume 1, which came out in March 2016, profiled ancient music from the Highlands of Scotland. Volume 2 featured performances on reconstructed Viking instruments as well as more recent, fully documented repertoire from the arrival of Christianity in Scandinavia. Volume 3 showcased the giant Celtic horns of Ancient Europe, dating

back more than 2000 years. Volume 4, meanwhile, delved significantly further back, bringing us the sounds of the oldest instruments ever found: 40,000-year-old vulture bone flutes that were discovered in cave sites in southern Germany.

The brainchild of Rupert Till, the series cuts a cross section of a rapidly expanding field. 'Music archaeology as a discipline kicked off after a military bandsman was given the opportunity to play a trumpet from Tutankhamun's tomb in 1939,' explains Till. 'He played the actual archaeological find, rather than a reconstruction, which is crazy. It's like finding a 2000-year-old piece of food and trying to eat it. So the trumpet broke in the process. But the event launched a lot of interest, and eventually there were several people keen to work in this area.'

Till's own interest dates from about 11 years ago, when his specialism in acoustics led him to explore various historic sites. 'I wanted to find out what Stonehenge sounded like. But you can't hear acoustics unless you make a sound. So I thought, "Let's find some appropriate instruments to play here", which is how I got to know the archaeologists making reconstructions and the professional musicians who played them.' Together, they launched the European Music and Archaeology Project (EMAP) – an EU-funded initiative that, through a series of exhibitions and events, devotes itself to reconstructing and showcasing ancient instruments. And it was through his involvement with EMAP that Till hit upon the idea of immortalising the instruments on CD: 'It struck me that there weren't many high-quality recordings of them, featuring high-quality professional performances. I wanted to try and do something about that.'

He succeeded. All the discs in this new series are curated by leading academic authorities, and feature virtuosic performers. What is most striking, however, is the sheer range of reconstructed instruments on display. There are the humble Viking cow horns, the panpipes, the mammoth-tusk flutes: the treasures of herders, butchers and shepherds. But there are also products of astonishing craftsmanship, that catered to the elite.

Few but the most educated in ancient Greek and Roman society would have played an instrument as difficult as the lyre. Few among the Iron Age Celts would have owned anything as ornate as the carnyx, a huge trumpet that was shaped to resemble a wild boar with the decoration mirroring the folds of skin around the boar's face.

And few would have had access to the Hydraulis. Invented in Alexandria in the third century BC, and widely employed in the amphitheatre, this Roman water organ sounded like



Barnaby Brown plays a pair of Poseidonia auloi; Justus Willberg records on the Hydraulis



a crossbreed between a flute and recorder. But its mechanism, involving the conversion of water energy into air pressure, foreshadowed that of a modern-day pipe organ. No wonder it piqued the curiosity of Emperor Nero himself, who had one installed in his palace.

As Till summarises, 'All of these instruments were artworks in their own right, with the

potential to make complicated and difficult sounds. The skill you need to be able to make these things by hand is immense.' It's not surprising then, that few, up until this project, have managed to reconstruct them with any real degree of accuracy. 'There are some people in Greece and the Mediterranean who have tried to "do" ancient Greek music, quite often dressed up in togas playing some form of aulos,' Till continues: 'Then there are people who make instruments based on what they remember of a picture they once saw on a pot.'

What distinguishes EMAP is its focus on authenticity. A range of instruments has been made specially for the project by academics with decades of experience. Stefan Hagel,

a Classicist at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, compared hundreds of ancient Greek pots, reliefs and original remnants of instruments in his quest for the perfect aulos reed.

'We know from Roman accounts that Celtic carnyces sounded like an entire landscape coming to life' – John Kenny, trombonist

The English composer and trombonist John Kenny, the sole performer on Volume 3 who also appears on Volume 5, worked with instrument maker Jean Boisserie to perfect a reconstruction of the Celtic carnyx from Tintignac, France, in order to unlock its 'true' voice. Neither claims to have all the answers, and will readily admit that in a field where archaeological and iconographic evidence remains fragmentary, an element of guesswork is unavoidable. But they certainly can't be accused of cutting corners.

Nor, for that matter, can the other performers involved in the project, many of whom have devoted years to mastering instruments that were not necessarily designed to be user-friendly. Case in point: Anna Friederike Potengowski, who features in Volume 4 of the CD series, 'Music from

the Edge of Time: Palaeolithic bone flutes of France & Germany'. Despite being trained as a flautist, she took eight years to overcome the challenges of playing the carefully reconstructed 40,000-year-old bone flutes: 'Initially I sounded like a little girl on the recorder.' She continues: 'In one way these flutes look like simple instruments as they only have five holes for the fingers. But I think whoever made them had some ambition.' Why? 'Well, my very first sounds were multiphonics: two notes at once. This is an effect used often in contemporary music, and you need to



Potengowski's mammoth ivory flute; Brown's vulture bone flute



practise a long time to get it on a modern flute, but on these instruments, it's easy to get them. So it's quite possible that this is what musicians would have played 40,000 years ago.'

Quite possible, but far from definite, because, with no written sources to draw upon, Potengowski has no means of divining the characteristics of 40,000-year-old music. Sensibly, she doesn't even try.

Instead, her CD embraces the sounds of modernity, featuring original fantasies by contemporary composers, as well as a classic piece by John Cage.

Other recordings in the series have fared a little better when it comes to showcasing historically appropriate sound worlds. Volume 1 comprises a set of pieces collected in a 1797 manuscript, which aimed to preserve the unwritten tradition of the Scottish Highlands. Volume 2, meanwhile, strives to shed some light on the music of the Vikings, by including the oldest known secular Norse song, notated in runes, that was found in the margins of a 14th-century legal manuscript. But 300 years separate this scrap of documentary material from the fall of the Viking Age, around 1066. And, as Cajsa S Lund, the main expert behind this second instalment, points out, 'Medieval songs and ballads would have started life as aurally transmitted melodies, which would have evolved from one generation to the next before they were eventually written down.' For Lund, then, as for many of her colleagues, the music of antiquity remains, by and large, a closed book.

In fact, only one of the EMAP recordings – the fifth and final instalment – has really managed to open it. That's partly because the rhythms of ancient Greek



Recording Volume 2 in Sweden (from top left, clockwise): Jens and Åke Egevad; two of Ensemble Mare Balticum (EMB); EMB and Delphian's Paul Baxter (right)

music are preserved in the words of literary epics, which were all written to be sung. But it's also because the Ancient Greeks left behind several documents inscribed with a vocal notation consisting of alphabetic letters and signs placed above the vowels of Greek words. Some of these were found on stone slabs in Greece, some on rolls of papyrus in Egypt. Almost all have survived only in fragmentary

form. Dating from around 300

BC to 300 AD, they presented Stefan Hagel – a world-leading expert on ancient Greek music and one of the co-organisers of EMAP – with a puzzle worthy of Sherlock Holmes when attempting to fill in the gaps: 'In order to see how the entire piece of music goes in any one of these fragments, you have to take an educated guess at the missing words, and from that, take an educated guess at the missing notation,' he explains. 'Sometimes there are so many possibilities that you just despair.'

But Hagel, who wrote his Masters thesis on the melodic structure in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, was up to the challenge. 'Apollo and Dionysus: Sounds from Classical Antiquity'

provides a technicolour snapshot of an astonishingly advanced musical culture. 'The Ancient Greeks dealt with semitones and quartertones, with modes. They had music which was very chromatic and modulatory. But they also had a simpler sort of music. And you can see all this very clearly in the different types of works dedicated to the gods.' Hagel continues: 'The most striking antagonism was between the music devoted to Apollo and that related to Dionysus. Apollo was always seen as young and never changing, so he was represented with a very traditional sort of



(From L-R) EMB's Stefan Wikström, and Åke and Jens Egevad playing wooden lurs

music. Dionysus, on the other hand, was harder to get a grip on, so all the music dedicated to him tended to be much more chromatic, modulatory and theatrical.'

That the very concept of 'music' was derived from the Greek word 'muse' should come as no surprise; it infiltrated ancient Greek society at every level. As Hagel points out, 'There was music for the amphitheatre, for libation, for rowing, even cooking.' Perhaps most significantly, there was music for performance in concert, a phenomenon that would have to wait several hundred years before being replicated in other western cultures. 'Our definition of music is very different to, say, Hildegard von Bingen's,' says John Kenny. 'The attention we give to music, the sitting down and listening to it – they are all very recent developments.' Which leads Kenny on to his pet subject, the role of the ancient Celtic carnyx: 'I suspect it was used in battle, to shock and awe. We know that carnyces were played in multiples, and we know from Roman accounts that they sounded like an entire landscape coming to life: a frightful din.'

Does that mean that we should dismiss the carnyx as a battleground accessory? Kenny won't hear of it: 'The fact that all the carnyces discovered so far were found at sacrificial sites, and had been silenced (with spears stuffed down their throats), all of this suggests that they were extremely culturally valuable and were used in ritual.'

'Those living thousands of years ago were capable of a level of craftsmanship to challenge anyone today' – Rupert Till, EMAP


Kenny's aim is to draw attention to the carnyx's softer side, and, as a result, challenge received notions of the ancient Celts as a primitive people. His thinking chimes with that of Rupert Till, who views the entire CD series as a way of reassessing the preoccupations of our ancestors: 'We tend to see long-lost civilisations as being warmongering,' Till says. 'In reality, the Anglo Saxons, Celts and Vikings lived for long periods in Britain without war; they were much more interested in trade. Musical instruments, as expensive, cultural artefacts, played an important part in that.' Indeed, Till was astonished to discover the degree to which ancient cultures were able to share and transport their instruments. 'You might think of a bagpipe as Scottish, but when you look a little closer, you realise there were bagpipes in Spain, and Sicily. Likewise, carnyces were spread right across Europe, as were bone flutes.' All of which makes it easy to see why the EU chose to invest in the EMAP project, 'as a means of understanding Europe's common cultural tradition.'

For Till and his colleagues, however, working on the CD series has also been a means to something else: comprehending the timelessness of what it is to be human. 'It was a shock to me to discover just how advanced people were thousands of years ago,' says Till. 'They were capable of a level of craftsmanship that would challenge anyone alive today.' And it is the sounds produced by such finely crafted instruments that ultimately motivate musical archaeologists, because, as John Kenny points out: 'Our ability to organise sound is innate, in fact it probably derives from the period before we developed speech. And so a musical instrument occupies a unique area in trying to connect with our ancient forbears.'

'Apollo and Dionysus: Sounds from Classical Antiquity' is released on Delphian in September; as 'Professor Chill', Rupert Till has paired the sounds of ancient instruments recorded for Delphian with electronic music on a new album, 'Dub Archaeology', out now on Twin Records

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANTON WIKSTROM


MUSIC ARCHAEOLOGY



Brahms

The Symphonies

★★★★★ THE TIMES — ★★★★★ THE GUARDIAN
 ★★★★★ THE SCOTSMAN — ★★★★★ BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE
 ★★★★★ ALL MUSIC




CKD 601

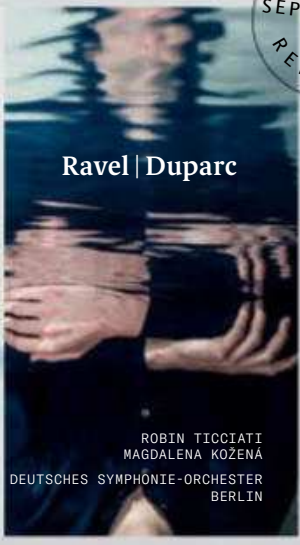
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THE SHORTLIST

The summer of voting is over and the long list has been narrowed down by our critics to just three recordings per category. On August 31 – at gramophone.co.uk – we announce the winners in each category. Then, on September 13, live on medici.tv, we name our Recording of the Year. But for now, just enjoy exploring these 30 superb releases from the 2017-18 vintage!

CHORAL

- **'Ein feste Burg'** Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier with Bart Jacobs *org*
- **Monteverdi** The Other Vespers I Fagiolini / Robert Hollingworth
- **Pärt** Magnificat. Nunc dimittis **Schnittke** Psalms of Repentance
Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir / Kaspars Putniņš



Ricercar Ⓢ
RIC376 (10/17)



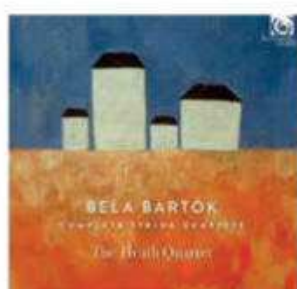
Decca Ⓢ
483 1654DH (7/17)



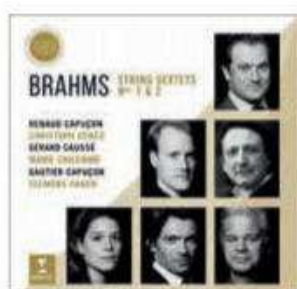
BIS Ⓢ
BIS2292 (3/18)

CHAMBER

- **Bartók** Complete String Quartets **The Heath Quartet**
- **Brahms** String Sextets Nos 1 & 2 **Renaud Capuçon, Christoph Koncz** *vns* **Gérard Caussé, Marie Chilemme** *vas* **Gautier Capuçon, Clemens Hagen** *vcs*
- **Dvořák** Quintets **Boris Giltburg** *pf* **Pavel Nikl** *va* **Pavel Haas Quartet**



Harmonia Mundi Ⓢ
HMM90 7661/2 (9/17)



Erato Ⓢ
9029 58883-7 (6/17)



Supraphon Ⓢ
SU4195-2 (11/17)

CONCERTO

- **Bartók** Violin Concertos Nos 1 & 2 **Christian Tetzlaff** *vn*
Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Lintu
- **Haydn. CPE Bach** Cello Concertos
Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen / Steven Isserlis *vc*
- **Mozart** Piano Concertos Nos 25 & 27 **COE / Piotr Anderszewski** *pf*



Ondine Ⓢ
ODE1317-2 (5/18)



Hyperion Ⓢ
CDA68162 (A/17)



Warner Classics Ⓢ
9029 57242-2 (2/18)

CONTEMPORARY

- **Dean** Dramatis personae **Francesconi** Hard Pace
Håkan Hardenberger *tpt* **Gothenburg SO** / **John Storgårds**
- **Dusapin** String Quartets Nos 6 & 7 **Arditti Quartet** et al
- **Pickard** Symphony No 5, etc **Sols; BBC NOW** / **Martyn Brabbins**



BIS (F)
BIS2067 (8/17)



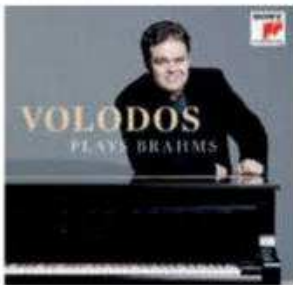
Aeon (F)
AECD1753 (8/17)



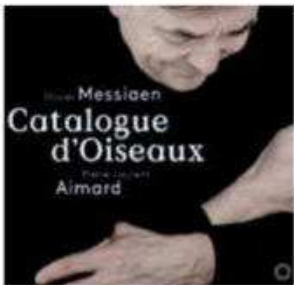
BIS (F)
BIS2261 (A/17)

INSTRUMENTAL

- **Brahms** Piano Pieces, Opp 76, 117 & 118 **Arcadi Volodos** *pf*
- **Messiaen** Catalogue d'oiseaux **Pierre-Laurent Aimard** *pf*
- **Stravinsky** 'Music for two pianos' **Marc-André Hamelin, Leif Ove Andsnes** *pfs*



Sony Classical (F)
88875 13019-2 (6/17)



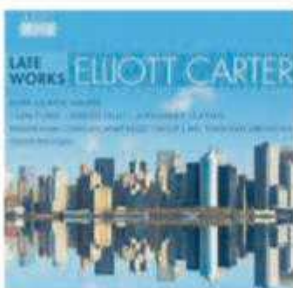
Pentatone (F) (3)
PTC5186 670 (4/18)



Hyperion (F)
CDA68189 (2/18)

ORCHESTRAL

- **Carter** 'Late Works' **Sols; BCMG; BBC SO** / **Oliver Knussen**
- **Ravel** Daphnis et Chloé **Les Siècles** / **François-Xavier Roth**
- **Tchaikovsky** Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique' **MusicaAeterna** / **Teodor Currentzis**



Ondine (F)
ODE1296-2 (9/17)



Harmonia Mundi (F)
HMM90 5280 (6/17)



Sony Classical (F)
88985 40435-2 (1/18)

SOLO VOCAL

- **Eisler** 'Lieder, Vol 1' **Holger Falk** *bar* **Steffen Schleiermacher** *pf*
- **Fauré** 'Complete Songs, Vol 2' **various singers; Malcolm Martineau** *pf*
- **'Secrets'** French songs **Marianne Crébassa** *mez* **Fazil Say** *pf*



MDG (F)
MDG613 2001-2 (8/17)



Signum (F)
SIGCD472 (7/17)



Erato (F)
9029 57689-7 (12/17)

EARLY MUSIC

- **Compère** Missa Galeazescha **Odhecaton** / **Paolo Da Col**
- **'Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks, Vol 5'**
Blue Heron / **Scott Metcalfe**
- **'Parle qui veut'** **Sollazzo Ensemble**



Arcana (F)
A436 (11/17)



Blue Heron (F)
BHCD1007 (10/17)



Linn (F)
CKD529 (12/17)

OPERA

- **Berlioz** Les Troyens **Sols; Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra** / **John Nelson**
- **Debussy** Pelléas et Mélisande **Sols; LSO** / **Sir Simon Rattle**
- **Lully** Alceste **Sols; Les Talens Lyriques** / **Christophe Rousset**



Erato (B) (4)
9029 57622-0 (12/17)



LSO Live (S) (4)
LSO0790 (12/17)



Aparté (M) (2)
AP164 (2/18)

RECITAL

- **'Agitata'** **Delphine Galou** *mez* **Accademia Bizantina** / **Ottavio Dantone** *hpd*
- **'Mirages'** **Sabine Devieille** *sop* **Les Siècles** / **François-Xavier Roth**
- **'Visions'** **Véronique Gens** *sop* **Munich Radio Orchestra** / **Hervé Niquet**



Alpha (F)
ALPHA371 (1/18)



Erato (F)
9029 57677-2 (12/17)



Alpha (F)
ALPHA279 (7/17)

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SEASON PREVIEW 2018-19

We bring you the best live classical music events and opera productions from across the UK, Europe, North America and even further afield in our annual guide to the new concert season

UNITED KINGDOM



Kirill Karabits celebrates his 10th season in charge of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra with performances of Shostakovich, Elgar, Beethoven and Dvořák

Academy of Ancient Music

A strong choral theme weaves its way through the AAM's new season, marked out by arrivals and departures at two of their regular collaborating ensembles. The orchestra presents three concerts with the BBC Singers and its new chief conductor Sofie Jeannin, including Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, and marks the retirement of Stephen Cleobury from his position at King's College, Cambridge with Bach's *St Matthew Passion* under the departing director's baton.

aam.co.uk

Academy of St Martin in the Fields

Standing colossus-like over the Academy's new season is a major project with Principal Guest Conductor Murray Perahia, who will tackle all five piano concertos by Beethoven directing from the keyboard – catch them on tour in Europe throughout November and December. In London, Music Director Joshua Bell play-directs Tchaikovsky at Cadogan Hall, and joins the Academy Chamber Ensemble for Mendelssohn and Enescu at Wigmore Hall.

asmf.org

Aurora Orchestra

The Aurora Orchestra tours to Amsterdam and Cologne at the start of the season but returns to London in September for a typically imaginative season starting with *Smoke and Mirrors*, a celebration of spirits and myths combining HK Grüber's *Frankenstein!!* with Beethoven's Symphony No 5. The season ends at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall with a new work by Max Richter and a performance of Mozart's Symphony No 41 played from memory.

auroraorchestra.com

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

A focus on choral works unites the BBCNOW and Chorus for performances of Stanford's rarity *Mass Via Victrix* 1914-1918 (in its first complete performance) and Britten's *War Requiem* on Armistice Day, November 11. The orchestra also celebrates the 10th birthday of its beautiful home on Cardiff Bay, BBC Hoddinott Hall.

bbc.co.uk/bbcnow

BBC Philharmonic

The BBC's orchestra in Manchester throws the spotlight on Kaija Saariaho

in October, presenting her *Laterna magica* and *Maan varjot* in one concert, conducted by Ludovic Morlot. Elsewhere Sheku Kanneh-Mason plays the Elgar Cello Concerto and Omer Meir Wellber conducts Act I of Wagner's *Die Walküre* with soloists including Brindley Sherratt and Christiane Libor.

bbc.co.uk/philharmonic

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

As part of its ongoing Composer Roots series curated by chief conductor Thomas Dausgaard, the BBC SSO will examine the influence of Jewish music on Mahler's First Symphony with the help of klezmer ensemble She'Koyokh. Other highlights include a performance of Rued Langgaard's monolithic *Music of the Spheres* in Glasgow Cathedral and, back at City Halls, Berlioz's *Lélio*, marking the 150th anniversary of the composer's death.

bbc.co.uk/bbcssso

BBC Singers

Sofi Jeannin officially begins her tenure as chief conductor of the BBC Singers this season and her first concert at Milton Court references her past career in France: a programme of Lully and Rameau for which she and the choir are joined by the Academy of Ancient Music and dancer/choreographer Aakash Odedra. Elsewhere the Singers will combine the music of Arnold Bax with that of Cheryl Frances-Hoad and present a Christmas Concert under John Rutter and Bob Chilcott.

bbc.co.uk/singers

BBC Symphony Orchestra

The BBC's flagship performing group opens the season with an examination of Holst's *The Planets* for which the orchestra is joined at the Barbican by scientist and broadcaster Professor Brian Cox. Other highlights include a rare outing for Ethel Smyth's Mass in D with the BBC Symphony Chorus and new works by Richard Causton, Cheryl Frances-Hoad, Gavin Higgins and Paweł Szymański.

bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

A big statement opens the BSO's new season in Poole: Mahler's



Sofi Jeannin begins her tenure as chief conductor of the BBC Singers this season

Resurrection Symphony under the baton of chief conductor Kirill Karabits. The Ukrainian celebrates his 10th season in charge of the orchestra with performances of touchstone symphonies by Shostakovich, Elgar, Beethoven and Dvořák. The BSO will commemorate the end of the First World War with Nielsen's *Inextinguishable* Symphony, Prokofiev's *War and Peace* and Turnage's *Testament*.

bsolive.com

Britten Sinfonia

Britten Sinfonia's multi-season Beethoven cycle reaches the Symphonies Nos 7, 8 and 9, the latter of which rounds off the orchestra's season at the Barbican in London and is conducted by Thomas Adès. Elsewhere, jazz pianist Brad Mehldau gives the world premiere of his Britten Sinfonia-commissioned Piano Concerto while Joby Talbot's cantata *A Sheen of Dew on Flowers* is heard alongside Mendelssohn's Symphony No 3.

brittensinfonia.com

Cadogan Hall

The new Choral At Cadogan season will see visits from the Choir of St George's Chapel Windsor, Voices New Zealand, The Sixteen and The Tallis Scholars. Details of visiting international orchestras were in the pipeline at the time of going to press but the resident Royal Philharmonic Orchestra presents a cornucopia of treats including Mozart's Requiem under Hilary Davan Wetton and Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1 with soloist Boris Giltburg.

cadoganhall.com

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Music director Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla will lead a series of 23 concerts under the banner Baltic Way, marking the centenary of the establishment of the Baltic States and 30 years since their declaration of independence from the Soviet Union. Elsewhere, Simon Rattle returns to conduct Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and artist-in-residence Gidon Kremer will explore the works of Mieczysław Weinberg.

cbso.co.uk

City of London Sinfonia

CLS's new season launches with its major focus on the music of one of the great geniuses of music history. *Bach and the Cosmos* celebrates Johann Sebastian Bach's interest in mathematics and numerology and will include a performance of the composer's B minor Mass at Southwark Cathedral as well as insights from James Sparks, a mathematician from the University of Oxford who joins the ensemble at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

cityoflondonsinfonia.co.uk

Classical Opera

Classical Opera's Mozart 250 project - which tracks the composer's activities precisely two and a half centuries on from their place in history - alights on the year 1769. The company presents the original version of Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne* and the UK premiere of Hasse's contemporary *Piramo e Tisbe*. There will also be works by Mozart's father, Paisiello and Grétry.

classicalopera.co.uk

The English Concert

The English Concert's 45th anniversary season includes visits from Brenda Rae, Fflur Wyn, Dorothee Miels, Elizabeth DeShong and Ailish Tynan. Artistic director Harry Bicket will lead a concert performances of Handel's *Semele* at the Barbican and explore the cross-pollination of ideas through the music of Mozart and Haydn. At Shakespeare's Globe, the orchestra presents *Emilia: The Music of the Dark Lady*, exploring the role of Emilia Bassano in the creation of Shakespeare's sonnets.

englishconcert.co.uk

English National Opera

ENO makes the right sort of headlines at last courtesy of the first new, main-stage production of *Porgy and Bess* by a UK opera company since Trevor Nunn's landmark production for Glyndebourne in the 1980s. There are new stagings of *Salome*, *The Merry Widow* and Britten's *War Requiem* at the Coliseum while Jonathan Miller's *La bohème* and Simon McBurney's *The Magic Flute* are among the revivals.

eno.org

English Touring Opera

ETO's Autumn season is an all-Baroque affair including performances of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, Handel's *Radamisto* and an intriguing triple-bill combining Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas*, Carissimi's *Jonas* and Gesualdo's *I Will Not Speak*. The company visits UK towns from Exeter to Ulverston via Bath, Buxton, Snape, Durham, London and Saffron Waldon.

englishtouringopera.org.uk

Hallé Orchestra

Berlioz looms large over the Hallé's new season, with a concert performance of *The Damnation of Faust* under Sir Mark Elder's baton rubbing shoulders with the *Symphonie fantastique* and overtures to *Les francs-juges* and *Benvenuto Cellini*. Elsewhere Edward Gardner returns to the orchestra with which he started his career to lead Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* and Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, having recently made recordings of both works.

halle.co.uk



Opera North, pictured here in *The Merry Widow*, celebrates its 40th birthday with a new production and several revivals

Kings Place

Kings Place's *Time Unwrapped* series continues for the remainder of 2018, with visits from Hugo Ticciati and his O/Modernt Chamber Orchestra from Sweden, while the conductor James Weeks gives a performance of Tom Johnson's voice and metronome work *A Time To Listen*. Elsewhere is the venue's celebration of the transformative power of the Noh tradition with the help of visitors from Japan.

kingsplace.co.uk

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Vladimir Jurowski brings us the second half of his Stravinsky series, which includes performances of *Orpheus*, a concert rendition of *The Rake's Progress* and a rare outing for the *Variations In Memoriam Aldous Huxley*. Jurowski also reaches the second phase of his *Ring* cycle with *Die Walküre*. Other highlights include a complete Beethoven Piano Concerto cycle from Javier Perianes and Juanjo Mena.

lpo.org.uk

London Sinfonietta

London's contemporary music orchestra is not shrinking into the shadows following its 50th anniversary season. Among the performances that ping out of its 2018/19 schedule are a staging by Benjamin Lazar of Stockhausen's *Donnerstag auch Licht* and a screening of Alfred Machin's 1914 pacifist film *Maudite soit la guerre* accompanied by Olga Neuwirth's new score to the film written in 2014.

londonsinfonietta.org.uk

London Symphony Orchestra

For his second season at the helm of the LSO, Simon Rattle focuses on the theme Roots & Origins while principal guest conductor François-Xavier Roth will explore European music at the crossover of the 19th and 20th centuries in *Back to the Future*. Peter Sellars returns to stage Lassus's *Lagime di San Pietro* and Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* and the orchestra will premiere a new version of James MacMillan's *All The Hills and Vales Along*.

lso.co.uk

Manchester Camerata

The Camerata begins a five-year project to perform and record Mozart's complete piano concertos with Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and music director Gábor Takács-Nagy at Stoller Hall, Manchester's newest venue and part of Chetham's School. Elsewhere Leticia Moreno plays the Bruch Violin Concerto at the Bridgewater Hall and the orchestra presents its usual Christmas and New Year concerts.

manchestercamerata.co.uk

Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists

The Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique marks the Berlioz anniversary with an all-Berlioz concert, for which it is joined by Joyce DiDonato, at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg; the programme then tours to the US, France and Holland. In the UK the Monteverdi Choir and ORR perform Verdi's Requiem at Westminster Cathedral and on tour in Europe.

monteverdi.co.uk

National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain

This Winter the NYO and Sir Mark Elder present a performance of Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* in collaboration with actors from the National Youth Theatre. The programme visits Manchester, Nottingham and Birmingham. Kirill Karabits takes the baton in January with a newly orchestrated version of Rick Dior's percussive classic *Science Fiction*, John Adams's *Doctor Atomic Symphony* and Sibelius's Symphony No 2.

nyo.org.uk

Opera North

The opera company for the north of England celebrates its 40th birthday with a season exploring what human conflicts mean and produce. Edward Dick directs a new production of *Tosca* and James Brining takes care of a new staging of *The Magic Flute*. Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* and a double-bill of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* are among the revivals.

operanorth.co.uk

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

The OAE's season titled *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* includes performances – all on period-specific instruments – of Brahms's Requiem (Marin Alsop), Bach's *St John Passion* (Simon Rattle), Handel's *Apollo e Daphne* and Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial By Jury* (John Wilson), each involving fringe events, discussions and contextual lectures.

oae.co.uk

Philharmonia Orchestra

The Philharmonia's contemporary music strand offers audiences the chance to immerse themselves in the music of Franco Donatoni. In addition, titled conductors step out of their regular repertoire areas: we hear Bruckner from Esa-Pekka Salonen and Strauss from Santtu-Matias Rouvali in the autumn, but order is restored when Czech maestro Jakub Hrůša conducts Kodály and Dvořák in February.

philharmonia.co.uk

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

The Merseyside orchestra's 13th season under music director Vasily Petrenko will include a performance of Britten's *War Requiem* at Liverpool Cathedral, a complete Brahms symphony cycle and a celebration of women composers to include music by Claudia Montero, Nadia Boulanger, Germaine Tailleferre, Grace-Evangeline Mason, Jennifer Higdon and Sofia Gubaidulina.

liverpoolphil.com

Royal Opera House

Keith Warner's 2006 production of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* will be presented as a full cycle in the autumn under Antonio Pappano's musical leadership. New productions include Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* in a staging by Richard Jones (conducted by Edward Gardner) and Stephan Herheim's take on Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, also conducted by Pappano.

roh.org.uk

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Highlights of the RPO's Southbank season include Lionel Bringuier conducting Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2 and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. Rafael Payare takes charge of Mahler's Symphony No 5 and Vasily Petrenko conducts Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*. There are plenty more treats over at Cadogan Hall (see listing).

rpo.co.uk

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Total regime change comes to the RSNO this season as Thomas Søndergård takes over as music director and is replaced as



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In their annual pilgrimage, The Sixteen focus on three of England's finest composers: Cornysh junior and senior, and Britten

principal guest conductor by Elim Chan. Søndergård will launch four-year-long Mahler and Prokofiev symphony cycles and conduct new works by Lotta Wennäkoski, Ken Johnston, Gary Carpenter, Wynton Marsalis and Paul Chihara. Chan will conduct repertoire ranging from Edward Elgar to Fung Lam.

rsno.org.uk

Saffron Hall

The Aurora Orchestra will visit the Saffron Walden venue to perform Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony from memory under conductor Nicholas Collon alongside the same composer's Piano Concerto No 2 and Mozart's ballet music from *Idomeneo*. Later, the Hallé makes its debut at the Suffolk hall under Edward Gardner, who conducts Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* and Sibelius's Symphony No 2.

saffronhall.com

Sage Gateshead/ Royal Northern Sinfonia

The Royal Northern Sinfonia celebrates its 60th birthday in September with a series of gala concerts. Lars Vogt will preside over a Brahms series while artists-in-residence Mahan Esfahani and Viktoria Mullova will present pieces ranging from Bach to Nyman to Brazilian folk music. William Marsey, Tansy Davies and Errollyn Wallen

have all written new works to mark the anniversary.

sagegateshead.com

St John's Smith Square

The Westminster venue continues to provide a home for Baroque music while championing new works. The season kicks off with the 'Fall Festival' in October, which mixes well-known and rarely heard works performed by artists from the UK and the US, and the venue's 33rd Christmas Festival, curated by Stephen Layton and featuring outstanding ensembles such as the Choir of New College, Oxford under Robert Quinney. Don't miss the regular Thursday lunchtime concerts - a platform for emerging artists as well as established instrumentalists and organists. There is much to enjoy from the evening events, too; in particular, a performance of Haydn's *The Creation* by La Nuova Musica, the Holst Singers and soprano Lucy Crowe in November.

sjss.org.uk

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

The SCO launches a three-year relationship with fellow Scot Nicola Benedetti, during which time the violinist will make her way through Mozart's five violin concertos beginning this season with the Third and Fifth. Elsewhere there is a French theme to the orchestra's

season, with a commemoration of the 150th year since Berlioz's death and works by Messiaen, Debussy, Gounod and Tanguy.

sco.org.uk

Scottish Opera

Scottish Opera is the third UK company to present a new production of Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* this season and the Glasgow staging is by Stephen Lawless. The company presents concert performances of Puccini's *Edgar* and Mascagni's *Silvano* and the world premiere of Stuart MacRae's *Anthropocene*, the emotionally freighted story of a challenging Arctic expedition.

scottishopera.org.uk

The Sixteen

The Sixteen's 2018 Choral Pilgrimage focuses on three representatives of English music at its finest, separated by four centuries. William Cornysh junior and senior were responsible for some of the most complex and adventurous church antiphons of the 16th century; their sacred and secular works are heard alongside similarly mixed-genre pieces by Benjamin Britten. The Choral Pilgrimage visits towns throughout Britain ranging from Croydon to Edinburgh.

thesixteen.com

Turner Sims

The classical season at Turner Sims gets under way with a performance of Schubert's evergreen *Trout* Quintet from Christian Blackshaw and soloists of the Berlin Philharmonic. Elsewhere, orchestra-in-residence SÓN presents an exploration of the music of Vaughan Williams, including *Flos Campi* with viola soloist Lawrence Power. There are also visits from young saxophone virtuoso Jess Gillam and The English Cornett and Sackbutt Ensemble.

turnersims.co.uk

Ulster Orchestra

Husband and wife Rafael Payare and Alisa Weilerstein open the Ulster Orchestra's season with a performance of Strauss's *Don Quixote*. Elsewhere, principal guest conductor Jac van Steen conducts an all-American evening, Laurence Cummings takes charge of a Christmas *Messiah*, Guy Braunstein plays the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto and Payare ends his tenure as the orchestra's music director with Mahler's Fifth.

ulsterorchestra.org.uk

Welsh National Opera

David Pountney's last season in charge of Welsh National Opera opens with his own new production of Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, conducted by the company's music director Tomáš Hanus. It continues with Pountney's staging of *Un ballo in maschera*, also new. There are revivals of stagings by David McVicar of *La traviata*, Alessandro Talevi of *Roberto Devereux* and Dominic Cooke of *The Magic Flute*.

wno.org.uk

Wigmore Hall

Schumann fans can hear a wealth of the composer's songs from some of the leading interpreters of the day complemented by his complete string quartets courtesy of the Elias String Quartet. Iain Burnside and Joseph Middleton present a Russian song series and Ravel song series respectively while a focus on American quartets will see multiple performances from the Esher and JACK string quartets, the latter presenting Elliott Carter's complete works in the form.

wigmore-hall.org.uk

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EUROPE



Robin Ticciati visits the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in January for a Mozart series in Salzburg, to include a performance of concert and opera arias by Louise Alder

Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome

The season at Rome's Parco della Musica opens with a concert performance of Bernstein's *West Side Story* under house chief Antonio Pappano. Other highlights include John Adams conducting his own *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, John Eliot Gardiner leading a performance of Berlioz's *Harold en Italie* and Pappano taking charge of Mozart's Requiem. Principal guest conductors Mikko Franck and Yuri Temirkanov make regular appearances with the Academy's orchestra.

santacecilia.it

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

It's all about big names and big repertoire at the BRSO this season. Chief conductor Mariss Jansons conducts Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, Mahler's Seventh and Bruckner's Mass No 3; Rattle continues his *Ring* cycle with *Die Walküre*; Haitink takes charge of Beethoven's Symphony No 9; Harding goes for Mahler's Symphony No 1 and Schoenberg's Violin Concerto while Masaaki Suzuki conducts Mendelssohn's oratorio *St Paul*.

br-so.com

Bavarian State Opera

Christof Loy's *Le nozze di Figaro* opens the season under Ivor Bolton's baton. New productions in Munich include Verdi's *Otello* directed by Amélie Niermeyer, *The Girl of the Golden West* directed by Andreas Dresen (James Gaffigan conducts) and Krenek's *Karl V* in a staging by Carlus Padrissa. Classic revivals include Richard Jones's stunning *Hänsel und Gretel* (originally for Welsh National Opera) and Calixto Bieito's *Fidelio* under outgoing music director Kirill Petrenko.

staatsoper.de

Bergen Philharmonic

Central to the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra's season is a Brahms festival that will see chief conductor Edward Gardner conduct the symphonies, concertos and Requiem with additional performances of key chamber works from distinguished visiting artists Lars Vogt and Christian Tetzlaff. Norwegian vocal favourites Lise Davidsen and Tora Augestad return and the season ends with Beethoven's Symphony No 9.

harmonien.no

Berlin Philharmonic

It is a season for taking stock as the Berlin Philharmonic is officially without a music director, after the

departure of Simon Rattle and before the arrival in 2019 of Kirill Petrenko. The slack will be taken up by Gustavo Dudamel, Daniel Harding, Zubin Mehta, Herbert Blomstedt and Mariss Jansons, and Rattle will return as a guest twice, on one occasion reviving Peter Sellars's staging of Bach's *St John Passion*.

berliner-philharmoniker.de

Chamber Orchestra of Europe

Robin Ticciati visits the COE in January for a Mozart series in Salzburg that includes Louise Alder's performance of concert and opera arias, plus the *Linz* Symphony. Bernard Haitink is at the helm the following month for Beethoven, Schumann and Mahler in Cologne and Luxembourg while it's back to Mozart in March, with concertos directed from the keyboard by Pierre-Laurent Aimard in Paris.

coeurope.org

Czech Philharmonic

It's the start of a new era at the Czech Philharmonic as Semyon Bychkov fills the void left by Jiří Bělohlávek, marking the occasion with Dvořák's resplendent Symphony No 7 and Berio's *Sinfonia*. Principal guest conductors Jakub Hrůša and Thomas Netopil offer plenty more Czech repertoire while

there are also visits from Simon Rattle and Ben Gernon.

ceskafilharmonie.cz

Danish National Symphony Orchestra

Fabio Luisi enters his third season at the helm of the DNSO with a further exploration of his nascent fascination for the music of Carl Nielsen, conducting the Symphony No 4. He also turns his hands to Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Bruckner's Second Symphony. Elsewhere Manfred Honeck conducts a concert performance of Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Barbara Hannigan takes charge of Mozart's Requiem.

drkoncerthuset.dk/dr-symfoni-orkestret

Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen

Roger Norrington, Pekka Kuusisto, Christian Tetzlaff, Joshua Weilerstein and Francesco Piemontesi all visit DKB at its home in Bremen this season, which focuses on the First Viennese School. Both Norrington and music director Paavo Järvi take the orchestra through Mozart with the latter contextualising his works with scores by Schubert and Haydn. Weilerstein conducts Sibelius's Symphony No 5.

kammerphilharmonie.com



Swedish soprano Miah Persson helps to bring the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra's 2018-19 season to a close with a Mozart gala

Deutsche Oper Berlin

Music director Donald Runnicles conducts new productions of Berg's *Wozzeck* (Ole Anders Tandberg) and Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg* (Tobias Kratzer). Keith Warner's *Nabucco*, Graham Vick's *Tristan und Isolde*, Richard Jones's *Boris Godunov*, Rolando Villazón's *La rondine* and Philipp Stölzl's *Parsifal* all return. The company presents the world premieres of Detlev Glanert's *Oceane* and Zad Moultaka's reworking of Handel's *Delirio*.

deutscheoperberlin.de

Elbphilharmonie Hamburg

The NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra gets used to life under Alan Gilbert with big-boned symphonies by Bruckner and Mahler and plenty of 20th-century repertoire from principal guest conductor Krzysztof Urbanski, including Lutoslawski's *Concerto for Orchestra*. There are visits from the SWR Symphony Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra and Vienna Philharmonic.

elbphilharmonie.de

Freiburg Baroque Orchestra

A French programme opens the FBO's season at home in Freiburg, featuring rarities by Clérambault, Lalande and Couperin. Alessandro Scarlatti's festive works form the basis of the orchestra's Christmas

celebrations, René Jacobs conducts Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* in May and the season concludes with a Mozart gala featuring Kristian Bezuidenhout and Miah Persson.

barockorchester.de

Göteborg Symphony Orchestra

Santtu-Matias Rouvali's second season will include a complete Beethoven symphony cycle, the nine scores played in order under the Finnish conductor's baton. Rouvali will open the season with Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* and later on Barbara Hannigan conducts two concert performances of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*.

gso.se

Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona

Highlights at the Catalan house include David Alden's staging of *Katya Kabanova*, also at Covent Garden this season. Damiano Michieletto's *Luisa Miller* is revived, as is Claus Guth's *Rodelinda* and Lotte de Beer's *Les pêcheurs de perles*. Benet Casablanca's *L'enigma di Lea* has its world premiere in February, conducted by Josep Pons.

liceubarcelona.cat

Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Principal conductor Yan-Pascal Tortelier makes his nationality felt

in Iceland with a wealth of French music including a performance of Canteloube's *Songs of the Auvergne* with soloist Anne Sofie von Otter. Icelandic composer Daniel Bjarnasson gets his British-premiered Violin Concerto aired at home with soloist Pekka Kuusisto while principal guest conductor Osmo Vänskä conducts Mahler's Symphony No 10 and Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony.

en.sinfonia.is

Insula Orchestra

In collaboration with partners including its own chamber choir Accentus, Insula Orchestra presents a staged performance of Weber's *Der Freischütz*, a concert performance of Mendelssohn's complete incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, symphonies by Beethoven and a performance of Bach's *St John Passion*. Its series at La Seine Musicale also includes visits from Alice Sara Ott, Les Talens Lyriques and Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra.

insulaorchestra.fr

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra

Kapellmeister Andris Nelsons begins his second season as the boss in Leipzig and takes on big works including Mahler's Symphonies Nos 3 and 5, Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, and a new work by Sean

Shepherd which will be the first piece heard in the new season. Marin Alsop takes charge of an all-Bernstein evening, Alan Gilbert conducts two all-Czech concerts and there are visits from Jaap van Zweden, Neeme Järvi and Omer Meier Wellber as well as old friend Herbert Blomstedt.

gewandhausorchester.de

Luxembourg Philharmonic

As usual the Philharmonie welcomes top-rank orchestras to give guest performances in the new season but its very own Orchestra Philharmonique de Luxembourg opens proceedings with concert performances of Verdi's *Rigoletto* featuring Simon Keenlyside in the title role. Chief conductor Gustavo Gimeno also takes charge of Mahler's Symphony No 4 while Martin Grubinger plays Kalevi Aho's Percussion Concerto and Andrew Manze conducts Bruckner's Symphony No 7.

philharmonie.lu

Mariinsky Theatre

No new productions are listed at the Mariinsky Theatre this season but there are revivals of some trusted classics including David McVicar's *Macbeth*, Elijah Moshinsky's *La forza del destino*, Yannis Kokkos's *Samson et Dalila* and a raft of Alexei Stepanyuk productions including *Eugene Onegin*, *Sadko*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Aida* and *Carmen*. Valery Gergiev also takes his forces on tour throughout the world from Scotland to Kazakhstan.

mariinsky.ru/en

Munich Philharmonic

Music director Valery Gergiev presides over the big symphonic repertoire and also brings his Mariinsky forces to Bavaria for a performance of Tchaikovsky's gorgeous one-act opera *Iolanta*. Elsewhere, look out for Fabio Luisi's Beethoven Symphony No 9, Santtu-Matias Rouvali's Prokofiev Symphony No 5, Andrew Manze conducting Mozart's Mass in C minor and the complete Schumann symphonies from Pablo Heras-Casado.

mphil.de

Müpa Budapest

The London Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and Collegium

1704 will all visit Müpa in the new season with conductors and soloists including Simon Rattle, John Eliot Gardiner, Kristóf Baráti, Midori and Catherine Foster. The venue also presents a full *Ring* cycle conducted by Ádám Fischer with the Danish baritone Johann Reuter as Wotan.
mupa.hu

Opéra de Paris

The hot ticket this season is Dmitri Tcherniakov's new staging of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* conducted by music director Philippe Jordan. Elsewhere Krzysztof Warlikowski takes charge of a new production of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* conducted by Ingo Metzmacher, Calixto Bieito directs a new *Simon Boccanegra* and Claus Guth directs the world premiere of Michael Jarrell's *Bérénice*.
operadeparis.fr

Orchestre de Paris

As well as participating in the Philharmonie de Paris's celebrations marking 150 years since the death of Hector Berlioz, the Orchestra de Paris presents a season reflecting on the great human conflicts of the 20th century. Daniel Harding ends his tenure as the orchestra's music director and there are visits from renowned soloists with an emphasis on singers, including Matthias Goerne, Christian Gerhaher, Renée Fleming and Barbara Hannigan.
orchestredeparis.com

Oslo Philharmonic

One season highlight will be a visit to the Norwegian capital from John Adams, who conducts a concert of his own music including *Scheherazade.2* with the work's champion Leila Josefowicz as soloist. Vasily Petrenko conducts Shostakovich's Symphony No 10 and Sibelius's Symphony No 5, and don't miss the performance of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony under the baton of the exceptional Han-Na Chang.
of.no

Palau de la Música

Among the high-profile visitors to Barcelona's beautiful concert hall this season are Sir András Schiff who plays Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Matthias Goerne, who performs Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* with Leif Ove Andsnes at the piano. Gustavo

Dudamel visits with the Munich Philharmonic to perform Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony, Philip Glass plays his own piano works and there is plenty more from the resident Barcelona Symphony Orchestra.
palaumusica.cat

Palazzetto Bru Zane

The home of French music in Italy presents a celebration of the Parisian works of Offenbach and an exploration of the effects of World War I on French creativity. In addition to concerts and events at its home in Venice, the Palazzetto presents festivals and mini-series in Paris, including a residency at the original home of French operetta, the Théâtre Marigny.
bru-zane.com

Pierre Boulez Saal, Berlin

Berlin's newest concert hall begins the season with a celebration of the French musician from whom it takes its name, Pierre Boulez. The season also includes a traversal of Schubert's songs from October to June as well as music, art and film from the Arab and Persian worlds incorporating the three-day festival, Arabic Music Days, and a visit from the Iranian Shanbehzadeh Ensemble.
boulezsaal.de

Il Pomo d'Oro

The Swiss ensemble is busy visiting Sofia, Groningen, Grenoble, Trento, Paris and Ljubljana this autumn but swings by London in October for a concert performance of Handel's *Serse* conducted by Maxim Emelyanychev. A trip to Moscow at the end of November will include Joyce DiDonato's *War & Peace* programme and Emelyanychev's performances of Mozart concertos, directed from the keyboard.
il-pomodoro.ch

RCO Amsterdam

The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra continues its mission to perform in all the EU member states with a tour of Scandinavia and the Baltic countries. At home in Amsterdam, it presents Britten's *War Requiem* under Mariss Jansons, Honegger's *Jean d'Arc* under Stéphane Denève and, under chief conductor Danielle Gatti, Bruckner's Symphony No 3 and Mahler's Symphony No 7.
concertgebouwworkest.nl

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Fast-rising young Italian conductor Daniele Rustioni oversees Laurent Pelly's new staging of *Falstaff* at Madrid's Teatro Real

Royal Stockholm Philharmonic

Thea Musgrave is the subject of the orchestra's Stockholm International Composer Festival in November, with dozens of works programmed including her orchestral score *Turbulent Landscapes* and the delicious Oboe Concerto. Tommie Haglund from Sweden is the focus of the annual Composer Weekend in March. Sakari Oramo guides the orchestra through the 11th season under his leadership.

konserthuset.se

RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra

The RTÉ NSO bookends its season with masterpieces: Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony under Robert Trevino to open and Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* under Kazuki Yamada to finish. Other highlights include an all-Russian programme from Alexander Vedernikov, a concert performance of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* under Patrik Ringborg and a wealth of repertoire across varied concerts from principal guest conductor Nathalie Stutzmann.

orchestras.rte.ie

St Petersburg Philharmonic

On two consecutive evenings in September, the St Petersburg Philharmonic presents all four of Rachmaninov's piano concertos and the *Paganini Rhapsody* featuring six different pianists (the First Concerto is played twice), all conducted by Alexander Titov. Yuri Temirkanov officially opens the season with

Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony and the season proceeds with a southern European flavour, offering works by Chabrier, de Falla, Bizet and Albéniz.

philharmonia.spb.ru

Semperoper Dresden

A British season opening sees Mark Wigglesworth conduct David McVicar's production of *La forza del destino*. New productions to look out for in Dresden include David Hermann's staging of Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* featuring music director Christian Thielemann in the pit, and Rolando Villazón's staging of Rameau's most popular opera, *Platée*, conducted by Paul Agnew on loan from Les Arts Florissants.

semperoper.de

Les Siècles

François-Xavier Roth's fine French ensemble kicks off the new season on September 20 at Brucknerhaus Linz with a concert performance of Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, a work they repeat two days later at Beethovenfest Bonn and again, on November 6 in Versailles. They're in Paris for their traditional New Year's concert on January 8 and are joined shortly afterwards by viola player Tabea Zimmermann for programme *Berlioz et L'Italie*. Looking forward to March, beginning in Aix-en-Provence, they embark on a gorgeous programme of Ligeti, Beethoven and Ravel before turning to 100% Mozart in April and, in May, 100% Berlioz.

francoisxavierroth.com/events

Staatskapelle Dresden

Alan Gilbert takes charge of the Staatskapelle's season opening with Mahler's Symphony No 1 before principal conductor Christian Thielemann takes the ensemble on a journey through all four of Robert Schumann's symphonies across two evenings in October, marking his seventh season at the helm. There are visits from Daniel Harding, Lionel Bringuier, Vladimir Jurowski and Andrés Orozco-Estrada.

www.staatskapelle-dresden.de

Suisse Romande Orchestra

Jonathan Nott's second season at the OSR is coloured by Brahms and Bartók. The chief conductor takes charge of Brahms's First Symphony and Second Piano Concerto, while Pierre-Laurent Aimard joins him for the first of Bartók's Piano Concertos. Susanna Mälkki conducts the composer's opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and Marek Janowski visits for an all-Schumann evening.

osr.ch

Les Talens Lyriques

Christoph Rousset's ensemble marks the 350th year since the birth of Couperin with a performance of his *Leçons de Ténèbres*. The group will take its Couperin celebrations to the US, Canada and Mexico. Salieri also looms large, with a CD release of the composer's opera *Les Horaces* and live performances of his *Tarare* in Vienna, Paris, Caen and Versailles. A concert performance of Handel's *Agrippina* in Halle closes the season.

lestalenslyriques.com

Teatro alla Scala

No fewer than 10 new productions grace La Scala's stage this season and among them is the season opener, Verdi's *Attila*, under the baton of Riccardo Chailly in Davide Livermore's staging. Chailly is also in the pit for David Pountney's new *Manon Lescaut* and Alan Gilbert takes charge of Graham Vick's new look at Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*. Elsewhere Nicola Raab directs a double bill of *Gianni Schicchi* with Salieri's *Prima la musica poi le parole* and Robert Carsen takes care of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*.

teatroallascala.org/en

Teatro Real, Madrid

One of the hottest tickets in Madrid will surely be Laurent Pelly's new staging of *Falstaff* with the fast-rising young conductor Daniele Rustioni in the pit. There are plenty more new productions at the Teatro Real including Christof Loy's *Capriccio*, Francisco Negrin's *Il trovatore*, Robert Wilson's *Turandot* and Alex Ollé's *Faust*.

teatro-real.com

Vienna Philharmonic

Elder statesman Herbert Blomstedt opens the Vienna Philharmonic's Musikverein season with music by his Swedish compatriot Franz Berwald and Dvořák's Symphony No 7. There are visits from Valery Gergiev who conducts a whole evening of Prokofiev, Christoph Eschenbach and Riccardo Muti who both bring Bruckner, Kirill Petrenko who takes the orchestra through Brahms's Fourth, and from Alain Altinoglu who brings Russian and French treats.

wienerphilharmoniker.at

Vienna Staatsoper

Christian Thielemann, Valery Gergiev, Simone Young, Ingo Metzmacher, Ádám Fischer, Eivind Gullberg Jensen and many more conductors of repute grace the Staatsoper's pit this season but only Alain Altinoglu gets to try his hand at Berlioz's mammoth *Les Troyens*, seen in a brand new production by David McVicar. Laurent Pelly directs a new *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Marco Arturo Marelli stages Manfred Trojahn's 2011 *Orest*.

wiener-staatsoper.at

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Mariinsky Orchestra

Valery Gergiev CONDUCTOR
Tchaikovsky THE SLEEPING BEAUTY – EXCERPTS; SYMPHONY NO. 5

4 DECEMBER 2018, 7.30PM

Czech National Symphony Orchestra

Heiko Mathias Förster CONDUCTOR | **Jennifer Pike** VIOLIN
Dvořák | Vaughan Williams | Strauss | Debussy | Smetana | Massenet | Tchaikovsky | Piazzolla

20 & 25 FEBRUARY 2019, 7.30PM

Symphony Orchestra of India

Zane Dalal CONDUCTOR | **Zakir Hussain** TABLA
Beethoven FIDELIO OVERTURE | Zakir Hussain PESHKAR | Rimsky-Korsakov SCHEHERAZADE
Martyn Brabbins CONDUCTOR | **Marat Bisengaliev** VIOLIN
Weber OBERON OVERTURE | Bruch VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 1 | Rachmaninov SYMPHONY NO. 2

4 & 5 MARCH 2019, 7.30PM

Mariinsky Orchestra

Valery Gergiev CONDUCTOR
Tchaikovsky SWAN LAKE – EXCERPTS
Tchaikovsky SYMPHONY NO. 4
Tchaikovsky THE NUTCRACKER – EXCERPTS
Tchaikovsky SYMPHONY NO. 6 (PATHÉTIQUE)

15 MARCH 2019, 7.30PM

Flanders Symphony Orchestra

Jan Latham Koenig CONDUCTOR | **Filippo Gorini** PIANO
Rossini THE ITALIAN IN ALGIERS OVERTURE | Beethoven PIANO CONCERTO NO. 3 | Puccini CHRYSANTHEMUMS | Mendelssohn SYMPHONY NO. 3 (SCOTTISH)

29 MARCH 2019, 7.30PM

Russian National Philharmonic Orchestra

Vladimir Spivakov CONDUCTOR | **Dali Gutserieva** CELLO | **Ekaterina Lekhina** SOPRANO
Shostakovich SYMPHONY NO. 9 | Konstantin Boyarsky CONCERTO FOR CELLO, SOPRANO & ORCHESTRA | Tchaikovsky SYMPHONY NO. 5

12 APRIL 2019, 7.30PM

Japan Philharmonic Orchestra

Pietari Inkinen CONDUCTOR | **Sheku Kanneh-Mason** CELLO
Rautavaara IN THE BEGINNING | Elgar CELLO CONCERTO | Takemitsu REQUIEM FOR STRINGS | Sibelius SYMPHONY NO. 2

14 MAY 2019, 7.30PM

Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra

Alexander Shelley CONDUCTOR | **Jan Lisiecki** PIANO | **David D.Q. Lee** COUNTERTENOR | **London Voices**
Ana Sokolović GOLDEN SLUMBERS KISS YOUR EYES... | Ravel PIANO CONCERTO IN G | Brahms SYMPHONY NO. 2

16 MAY 2019, 7.30PM

Russian Philharmonic (of Novosibirsk)

Thomas Sanderling CONDUCTOR | **Alexander Sitkovetsky** VIOLIN
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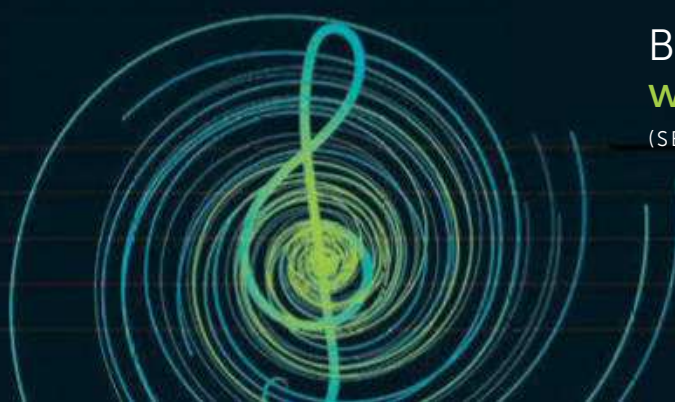
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NORTH AMERICA



Dallas Opera kick off the 2018-19 season with Christopher Alden's staging of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* (pictured here in the Canadian Opera Company production)

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Alongside a fascinating exploration of space and the cosmos across multiple concerts over the autumn, there are plenty of more traditional treats to enjoy including visits from Hannu Lintu in Sibelius's last two symphonies and from Nicholas McGegan who directs Vivaldi's *Le quattro stagioni*. Music director Marin Alsop takes charge of Copland's Symphony No 3, Messiaen's *Turangalila-symphonie* and the US premiere of Helen Grime's Percussion Concerto.

bsomusic.org

Boston Symphony Orchestra

The Shostakovich symphony cycle whose recorded fruits have garnered such positive reviews in *Gramophone* continues this season, with Andris Nelsons and the BSO tackling the composer's first and last symphonies. Nelsons will also lead a concert performance of Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and conduct music from his native Latvia to mark 100 years of the country's establishment.

bso.org

Canadian Opera Company

COC gives the world premiere of Rufus Wainwright's *Hadrian* in

October in a production by Peter Hinton. Johannes Debus conducts a new *Eugene Onegin* from Robert Carsen originally seen at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. John Caird's *La bohème* is revived along with James Robinson's *Elektra*, David Alden's *Otello* and Atom Egoyan's *Così fan tutte*.

coc.ca

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Muti and the CSO promise a season of 'legends' including performances of Verdi's *Aida*, Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, Zemlinsky's *Die Seejungfrau* and Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, the latter two conducted by Emmanuel Krivine and Esa-Pekka Salonen respectively. Muti will also take charge of Verdi's Requiem, in commemoration of the 1918 armistice, and Respighi's iridescent *Pines of Rome*.

cso.org

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

A year after its reopening, Cincinnati's Music Hall will resound to the sounds of a Beethoven symphony strand culminating in the CSO's music director Louis Langrée conducting a performance of the Ninth Symphony at the season finale in the spring. Earlier in the season

David Robertson conducts Mozart's Requiem, Donald Runnicles takes charge of Bruckner's Symphony No 8 and Langrée himself tackles Mahler's Symphony No 5.

cincinnati-symphony.org

The Cleveland Orchestra

The Cleveland Orchestra follows its centenary season with another delectably programmed musical menu. Franz Welser-Möst conducts Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* in concert, Schubert's Mass No 6 and orchestral songs by Sibelius with Simon Keenlyside. Other highlights are Ingo Metzmacher's exploration of the Second Viennese School culminating in Schoenberg's *Pelleas und Melisande*, and John Adams conducting his own works alongside Copland's *Appalachian Spring*.

clevelandorchestra.com

The Dallas Opera

The standout work in The Dallas Opera's new season is Offenbach's rarity *Pépito* - keep watch for details of the creative team, which were unconfirmed at the time of going to press. The season opens with Christopher Alden's staging of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* and ends with another revival of a classic show, Lee Blakeley's production

of Verdi's last opera, *Falstaff*. The conductor is Riccardo Frizza.

dallasopera.org

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

The DSO's Winter Music Festival focuses on American music with performances of works made in the USA both old and new. Among them are Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* and John Luther Adams's Pulitzer-winning *Become Ocean*. There are visits from Emanuel Ax, Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Christian Tetzlaff and an impressive list of guest conductors, one of whom may well end up filling the music directorship vacated by Leonard Slatkin.

dso.org

Handel and Haydn Society

Boston's early music ensemble opens its 204th season with a concert of Bach's greatest concertos and cantatas, including Brandenburg Concerto No 3 and Cantata BWV179. The ensemble augments for Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 5 and Symphony No 5, performs Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and wraps up the season with Mozart's Requiem under artistic director Harry Christophers.

handelandhaydn.org

LA Opera

Many will want to catch Thaddeus Stassberger's new production of Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, which opens in March, is conducted by the company's music director James Conlon and stars Russell Thomas in the title role. Conlon also conducts Ian Judge's staging of Verdi's *Don Carlos*, featuring LA Opera's general director Plácido Domingo as Rodrigo.

laopera.org

Los Angeles Philharmonic

The LA Phil presents a colossal season to celebrate its centenary, including no fewer than 50 new commissions described as the orchestra's 'greatest investment ever in music's future.' Many of the new works will come from the pens of Latino, black and female composers but there are works from former music directors André Previn and Esa-Pekka Salonen too. Mahler's Symphony No 8 gets its Disney Hall premiere under music director Gustavo Dudamel.

laphil.com

Lyric Opera of Chicago

The main event at the Chicago house this season is the start of David Pountney's new *Ring* cycle, conducted by music director Andrew Davis. Also new are Richard Jones's *La bohème* and *Ariodante*, alongside Laurent Pelly's *Cendrillon*. Harry Bicket returns for that production while Donald Runnicles takes care of the revival of David McVicar's *Elektra*.

lyricopera.org

The Metropolitan Opera

Nico Muhly's *Marnie* arrives in New York following its world premiere in London, but not before Mark Elder opens the Met's season with a new production of Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*, staged by Darko Tresnjak. music director designate Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts *La traviata*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Dialogues des Carmélites* and Philippe Jordan is in the pit for the revival of Robert Lepage's *Ring* cycle that closes the season.

metopera.org

Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä's Minnesota Mahler symphony series will continue with the Seventh and Tenth, both of



Andris Nelsons and the Boston SO continue their Shostakovich cycle with the first and last symphonies (see facing page)

which will be recorded for release on BIS. The season's featured composer is John Harbison, whose new organ concerto *What Do We Make of Bach?* will be presented at the University of Minnesota's Northrup Hall to mark the restoration of its organ. Elsewhere there is a three-week festival of American music and a new series in which MO musicians will accompany yoga sessions in Orchestra Hall's lobby.

minnesotaorchestra.org

Orchestra Symphonique de Montréal

Music director Kent Nagano leads the OSM's season opening, a performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Ravel's *Boléro*. Later in the season he scales the heights of Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* and Bach's B minor Mass, and pits Brahms's four symphonies against brand new works by specially commissioned composers. Michael Tilson Thomas makes his long-awaited OSM debut with Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*.

osm.ca

National Symphony Orchestra

Music director Gianandrea Noseda will conduct Britten's *War Requiem*, Mahler's Symphony No 1,

Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Liszt's *A Faust Symphony* in Washington while the NSO welcomes debut artist Denis Kozhukhin for Rachmaninoff's most testing piano concerto, the Third. The season ends with a three-concert Mozart Forever series but not before Renée Fleming has dropped by for an evening of Schubert song.

kennedy-center.org

New York Philharmonic

Jaap van Zweden is inaugurated as the New York Philharmonic's new music director with a performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and a season that prioritizes the orchestra's connection to the city it serves. The 'New York Stories' strand will include the world premiere of Julia Wolfe's *Fire in my mouth* while the Music of Conscience strand will pivot on the first performance of David Lang's *prisoner of the state*, a reflection on Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

nyphil.org

The Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin will spend 14 weeks with the orchestra this season while principal guest conductor Stéphane Denève will take care of a two-week festival

celebrating great Philadelphians of the past, Leopold Stokowski and Albert Barnes. An organ strand will see the East Coast premiere of Nico Muhly's Organ Concerto given by James McVinnie on the Verizon Hall organ while Nézet-Séguin conducts a semi-staged performance of Bernstein's *Candide* and his Symphony No 3, *Kaddish*.

philorch.org

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra salutes its music director Manfred Honeck's 60th birthday with a new work in honour of the maestro by Mason Bates, after which Honeck conducts Brahms's Symphony No 2. The season also includes a full cycle of the Rachmaninov piano concertos, Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* sung by Matthias Goerne and the Pittsburgh Symphony premiere of Haydn's *Missa in tempore belli*.

pittsburghsymphony.org

St Louis Symphony

Gemma New opens the season in St Louis conducting Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. Later in the season, Nicholas McGegan leads the orchestra and its chorus in a

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Bang on a Can
Eighth Blackbird

COMPOSER

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Olli Mustonen
(IN ASSOC. WITH SCHOTT MUSIC)
Owain Park
(IN ASSOC. WITH NOVELLO)

SOPRANO

Marie Arnet
Claire Booth
Sinéad Campbell-Wallace
Stephanie Corley
Sophie Daneman
Judith Howarth
Ellie Laugharne
Joanne Lunn
Natalya Romaniw

MEZZO-SOPRANO

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performance of Haydn's oratorio *The Creation*, music director designate Stéphane Dénève takes the orchestra through Scriabin's overwhelming *Poem of Ecstasy* and the ensemble's own bassoonist Andrew Cuneo gives the world premiere of Christopher Rouse's Bassoon Concerto.

slso.org

San Francisco Symphony

Michael Tilson Thomas's penultimate season in San Francisco sees him conduct the Ninth Symphonies of Beethoven and Mahler and conduct his own composition, *From The Diary of Anne Frank*. A special series titled Composers Who Paint With Music will place the music of Debussy and Ravel in the context of broader artistic achievements while the orchestra's film series includes live accompaniments to *Jurassic Park* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

sfsymphony.org

Toronto Symphony Orchestra

There is plenty to keep Torontonians interested while the TSO searches for a new principal conductor, including visits from John Storgårds who conducts Ravel's *Boléro*, Donald Runnicles who conducts Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Barbara Hannigan who sings and conducts Sibelius's *Luonnotar* and regular collaborator Andrew Davis who presents a Berlioz celebration culminating in the composer's *Symphonie fantastique*.

tso.ca

National Arts Center

The National Arts Center Orchestra celebrates its 50th birthday with a Beethoven festival which will include the nine symphonies under music director Alexander Shelley. The celebrations continue with a concert performance of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, a continuation of the ensemble's Vanguard Series for contemporary music and visits

from Shelley's predecessor Pinchas Zuckerman as well as Renée Fleming, James Ehnes, Jan Lisiecki and Trevor Pinnock.

nac-cna.ca

Tafelmusik

Elisa Citterio's second season at the helm of Canada's period-instrument orchestra and choir includes an all-Mozart opener, a delve into the world of the Italian spy, priest and composer Agostino Steffani, a performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* under Masaaki Suzuki, the return of former music director Jeanne Lamon for a celebration of the Baroque horn and a revival of the ensemble's *Tales of Two Cities* project uniting music from Leipzig and Damascus.

tafelmusik.org

Seattle Symphony

Ludovic Morlot's final season at the helm of the Seattle Symphony includes no fewer than 25 works

by living composers, 10 of which are world premieres, among them Caroline Shaw's Piano Concerto. But Morlot will conduct old as well as new, including Bach's B minor Mass and a contextual focus on the work of Claude Debussy to mark the centenary of the composer's death. Morlot's successor Thomas Dausgaard, currently principal guest conductor, offers Nielsen's *The Four Temperaments* and George Walker's Sinfonia No 5, *Visions*.

seattlesymphony.org

Washington National Opera

In addition to the world premiere of Kamala Sankaram's *Taking Up Serpents*, a tale of domestic strife in the context of religious snake handling, WNO presents a season of classics including Gounod's *Faust*, Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Puccini's *Tosca* and a concert performance of Verdi's *I vespri siciliani* under Gianandrea Nosedà.

kennedy-center.org

REST OF THE WORLD

Astana Opera House

Astana celebrates 20 years as capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan this season and with the milestone comes a wealth of Kazakh premieres, including the first performance on the country's soil of both Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. More details, including those of visiting companies, will be published later on the house's website.

astanaopera.kz

Hong Kong Philharmonic

Two previous music directors – David Atherton and Edo de Waart – will join current titled conductors Jaap van Zweden and Long Yu to mark the Hong Kong Philharmonic's 45th season. Atherton will conduct Holst's *The Planets*, Long will take care of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, de Waart conducts Brahms's Symphony No 2 and van Zweden leads Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2 at the season's opening concert.

hkphil.org

NHK Symphony Orchestra

In his fourth season at the helm of Japan's broadcasting orchestra, Paavo Järvi will conduct Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Mahler,



Shanghai SO, China's oldest orchestra, celebrates its 10th season under Long Yu

Stravinsky and Messiaen. Herbert Blomstedt returns to take on beloved symphonies by Bruckner and Mahler while guest conductors include Gianandrea Nosedà and Tugan Sokhiev. Jakub Hruša makes his debut with the historic Tokyo ensemble.

www.nhkso.or.jp

Royal Opera House Muscat

Plácido Domingo comes to Muscat to present a celebration of *zarzuela*, the light operatic tradition indigenous to Spain. Later in the season the Oman opera house gets a taste of a very different sort of European opera

in the form of Borodin's *Prince Igor*, performed by the visiting company from the Mariinsky Theatre under Valery Gergiev. Guest productions of *Madama Butterfly* and *La traviata* complete the opera programme.

rohmuscat.org.om

Shanghai Symphony Orchestra

China's oldest symphony orchestra begins its 10th season under music director Long Yu with a performance of Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with artist-in-residence, the baritone Thomas Bauer. Other season highlights include Mahler's Symphony No 5,

Beethoven's Violin Concerto from Leonidas Kavakos, and Osmo Vänskä's rendition of Copland's masterpiece, his Symphony No 3.

shsymphony.com

Singapore Symphony

Lan Shui leads the orchestra through its 40th season and welcomes his sometime predecessor, founding music director Choo Hoey, back to join in the festivities. A Viennese theme will see the orchestra journey through Austrian repertoire from Mozart to Mahler while major works by Borodin, Ravel and Lutosławski will rub shoulders with music by Singaporeans Leong Yoon Pin and Kelly Tang.

sso.org.sg

Suntory Hall

As well as its resident orchestras including the New Japan Philharmonic and Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra, Suntory Hall presents top-drawer visitors including the Vienna, Munich and St Petersburg Philharmonics, the LSO, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Bruckner's symphonies are a consistent theme from the visitors.

suntory.co.jp/suntoryhall

GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Edward Seckerson is bowled over by Antonio Pappano's dramatic accounts of Bernstein's three symphonies with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia



Bernstein

Symphonies – No 1, 'Jeremiah'^a;

No 2, 'The Age of Anxiety'^b; No 3,

'Kaddish'^c. Prelude, Fugue and Riffs

^aNadine Sierra sop ^aMarie-Nicole Lemieux mez

^cDame Josephine Barstow spkr ^dAlessandro

Carbonare cl ^bBeatrice Rana pf

Orchestra and ^cChorus of the Accademia

Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Sir Antonio Pappano

Warner Classics ④ 9029 56615-8 (113' • DDD)

Leonard Bernstein was the Honorary President of the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia from 1983 until his death in 1990. Temperamentally they were exceedingly well suited. Their ethos, their extrovert nature, to say nothing of their innately operatic manner, made them a good fit. And there's something of Bernstein's dynamism and eclectic, all-embracing nature in the person of Antonio Pappano whose penchant for, and love of, jazz for starters ticks one of the many boxes that this music demands. So here we have it: the three ages of Lenny the symphonist, fittingly signed off with that short, sharp, wacky jam session *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*.

Let me say straight away that these performances come at us with a theatricality that puts them firmly 'on stage' where they belong. All three pieces are essentially about the process we all go through to 'find ourselves', except that in Bernstein's case the question of belief and faith was to haunt him, trouble him, from first to last. How to reconcile being Jewish with his essentially agnostic nature. That *The Age of Anxiety* is flanked by the soul-searching of the *Jeremiah* and *Kaddish* Symphonies is nothing if not ironical.



'Beatrice Rana has the razzle-dazzle in spades, of course, but it is the mercurial throwaway manner that really excites'

One should give credit for the fact that Symphony No 1, *Jeremiah* – his very first orchestral work – sprang so fully formed from his imagination. For sure it is mightily filmic, a piece whose movement titles 'Prophecy', 'Profanation' and

'Lamentation' portend and indeed deliver biblical gestures; but the piece is big-hearted, too, and paradoxically there is an almost guilty jubilation in the central 'Profanation' movement – a destructive hedonism in which Bernstein's composerly prowess advances in leaps and bounds, powering forwards on the back of driving rhythms and self-evidently American syncopation. We are pre-dating and predicting here the prairie-pounding Scherzo of Copland's Third Symphony and the Santa Cecilia players fully relish the heat of it (flaring trumpet fanfares and all) only to slink back into the singing melody of the Trio section which hardly needs saying could only have been penned by Bernstein. Then there is resonance in the closing lamentation for the fallen city of Jerusalem (the political overtones will never have eluded Lenny) with Pappano's solo casting (inspired throughout this set) hitting precisely the right declamatory tone with Marie-Nicole Lemieux's ripely theatrical delivery.

The Second Symphony, *The Age of Anxiety* after WH Auden's tremendous prose poem, is I think Bernstein's finest concert work – still hugely underrated in

some quarters. This searching dark night of the soul, evolving as it does from that lonely two-part clarinet counterpoint at the outset (the musical equivalent of Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* and one of Bernstein's most inspired ideas), uses an interlocking variation technique to great effect, each new idea emerging from the last notes of the previous one to create not just a sense of evolution but of new beginnings, too.

Again, Pappano's choice of the audacious young Italian



Antonio Pappano and Beatrice Rana communicate thrillingly in 'The Age of Anxiety'



The Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia respond superbly to all three stages of Bernstein's symphonic development

pianist Beatrice Rana – a rising star if ever there was one – is right on the money. She has the razzle-dazzle in spades, of course, but it is the mercurial throwaway manner (cool, and then some, the jazzy 'Masque' at the heart of the piece brilliantly on point) that really excites. That and her ability suddenly to look inwards and to thoughtfully reflect on what is past and what is to come. She and Pappano communicate great kinship in the piece and that inexorable build to the cathartic peroration has impressive inevitability. One of those eternally hopeful Bernstein sunsets or sunrises, depending on your viewpoint.

Symphony No 3, *Kaddish*, is still the most problematic of the three symphonies for me, one in which the music seems almost incidental to Bernstein's spoken text. That text – highly emotive as it is – has always struck me as more therapeutic for him than it has ever been for the listener. What we have here is essentially a melodrama, a public venting of his troubled relationship

with God, the Father. But Pappano has played an absolute blinder in casting Josephine Barstow in the Speaker's role. She is tremendous and far and away the most exciting, the most affecting, the most probing narrator of any on disc. One can all too easily forget that she was an English scholar and an actress before she was a singer. She is blistering in her voicing of Bernstein's angry confrontations with his 'Tin God' while the music for its part wrestles with its thorniness, finding respite in the central lullaby and the glorious 'rainbow' theme which Bernstein, one feels, knows all too well is the manifestation of his true self. But it is Barstow that makes the piece work as never before in my view and it is Pappano who should take credit for knowing all too well that she would.

Lenny's Benny Goodman inspired-jam session *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* is the most pertinent of postscripts to this terrific set. Alessandro Carbonare emerges from the orchestra to lead his feisty combo through

the seven action-packed minutes where classical sleight of hand meets jazz improv. Hard to believe it's written down. But then that was the general idea. **G**

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	(number of discs	S	Synopsis included
	in set)	s	subtitles included
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	Audio CD)	aas	all available
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Ⓛ	LP		separately



Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Edward Seckerson listens to contrasting Shostakovich Fourths:

'This pairing is all about Stalin's all-pervasive climate of fear and loathing, and Shostakovich's creative response to it' ► **REVIEWS ON PAGE 62**



Charlotte Gardner on another winner from La Serenissima:

'These musicians represent one heck of a crack team when it comes to the music of Vivaldi' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 65**

Aho

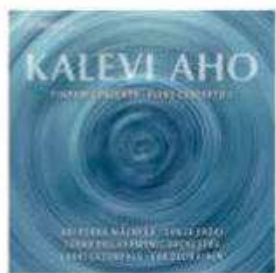
Piano Concerto No 1^a. Timpani Concerto^b

^aSonja Fräki *pf* ^bAri-Pekka Mäenpää *timp*

Turku Philharmonic Orchestra /

^bErkki Lasonpalo, ^aEva Ollikainen

BIS (F) BIS2306 (60' • DDD/DSD)



Kalevi Aho's stated aim in his 2016 Timpani Concerto was, as in his much-

loved Percussion Concerto (2011), to have the timpani lead the argument. But the drums themselves don't make it easy. They might be 'tuned' technically but they never really fix you in the eye with a specific note. Rhythmically they can sound dull, as if designed to underpin other sounds (unsurprisingly).

Aho's mystical opening dodges those problems with moderate success, as does his *Allegro ritmico* third movement (of five), in which sharper sticks get the timps sounding like big booming bongos. Ari-Pekka Mäenpää, who workshopped the score with Aho, plays it heroically but it's difficult not to conclude that these lumbering instruments aren't charismatic enough to headline a half-hour piece. Even when they really get going in the *Presto* finale, it's a little like listening to an old drunk ranting.

BIS, apparently determined to serve Aho in the completist terms it has Sibelius, does well to balance that rather frustrating piece with a rich, rhapsodic and charismatic one (albeit dug up from the archives). Aho's 1989 Piano Concerto is arranged according to a duodecimal cycle of 16 notes. That cycle is initially arranged into four groups of four (a triad-plus-one) in the first movement before moving to the full cycle of 16 in the second. By the fourth and final movement, we have gravitated to a new 30-note sequence that unravels itself to eventual freedom.

You can ignore the maths and still experience a virile piece with a thrilling, acidic edge (much of the latter coming

from flocking woodwinds). The first movement rigidly twists itself up towards a heckelphone deflation, a trajectory that reflects the piece as a whole. The third-movement Toccata is highly mobile, impressively agile and full of textural interest. The second movement and finale legitimise their atmospheres of spacious repose only because of the density of what has gone before. Sonja Fräki negotiates its Scarlatti-like weave with high articulation and tenderness, and the orchestra engages with her. **Andrew Mellor**

JS Bach

Keyboard Concertos - No 1, BWV1052;

No 2, BWV1053; No 4, BWV1055; No 5, BWV1056

La Risonanza / Fabio Bonizzoni *hpd*

Challenge Classics (F) CC72773

(63' • DDD/DSD)



There is a pleasing quality to Fabio Bonizzoni's first volume of Bach

harpsichord concertos, which achieves the difficult task of combining subtle artifice and interpretative *joie de vivre* with a manner that appears on the surface natural and uncomplicated. In Bach that's a pretty good balance to have.

Bonizzoni does not rush at the *allegros* but allows them time to speak clearly, an important attribute in a harpsichord concerto, where too much scurrying runs the risk of rendering the solo part an indecipherable clatter in which, while you may be able to hear that the notes are there, the actual pitch of them can be lost. Sound balance is crucial too in this, and here the recording has got it just right, with a tangy harpsichord sound properly audible but with the single strings still able to play out and express themselves without restriction. In this it reminds me of the first recordings I knew of these works, made in the 1960s by the Leonhardt Consort.

Yet there is more to them than that, for Bonizzoni's playing is alive with well-

judged and nourishing detail, whether it be plentiful but always pertinent ornamentation, telling rubato or energising articulation. Perhaps the slow movements of the A major (BWV1055) and E major (BWV1053) concertos could have relaxed the tempo a little more, and perhaps the recording is a little bass-clouded; but these things do not stop these from being immensely enjoyable and invigorating performances.

It is not clear whether this is part of a project to record the seven solo harpsichord concertos (in which case only one more disc will be needed) or whether the concertos for two, three and four harpsichords are planned as well. But the fact that he has here chosen the four concertos that are 'real' in the sense that they only survive in their harpsichord versions, rather than in their original forms, makes it as enticing on a practical level as for its considerable musical strengths. **Lindsay Kemp**

Beethoven • Shostakovich

Beethoven Symphony No 5, Op 67

Shostakovich Symphony No 5, Op 47

Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra /

Michael Sanderling

Sony Classical (F) 19075 82080-2 (81' • DDD)



Michael Sanderling leads a spick and span Beethoven Fifth. The long streams of

quavers in the first movement line up in tidy rows, like soldiers. Even when Beethoven throws the metre off kilter, as he does in the development section (at 3'28"), Sanderling makes sure his players maintain their balance and composure. I doubt this is what Beethoven intended but there's no question that Sanderling has the Dresden Philharmonic playing at the highest level. Listen, for instance, to the exquisite woodwind solos in the slow movement – most memorably, that soaring clarinet line at 1'51" – or the Handelian



Balance and composure: Michael Sanderling and the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra continue their pairings of Beethoven and Shostakovich

splendour of the fugal *maggiore* passage in the third movement's Trio. But, as a whole, the performance is simply too low voltage for such volatile music. Even in the wondrous transition to the finale there's a palpable lack of tension, so the sudden blaze of C major becomes a non sequitur.

Sanderling's way with Shostakovich's Fifth is similarly lacking in fire. The strings' vehement opening volleys feel oddly nonchalant here and this air of emotional detachment permeates the sluggish first movement – sample, say, the listless ostinato accompaniment at 4'12". The Scherzo has more pep, thankfully, but precious little bite; as in the Beethoven, Sanderling has smoothed out the music's jagged angles. And the symphony's final pages – taken slowly, as is the current practice – sound neither ironic nor celebratory but dutifully monumental, although audiophiles may appreciate the bass drum's floor-shaking wallop.

In some respects, Sanderling's interpretation is the antithesis of Manfred Honeck's (Reference Recordings, 2/18). Honeck wrings so much emotion from every detail that he loses the symphonic thread; Sanderling seems so intent on maintaining the music's abstract integrity that he fails to engage the emotions.

Curiously, both are at their most compelling in the *Largo*. Here, at last, Sanderling shows us a tender heart – and the Dresdeners follow suit. How acutely the flute and harp ache in the passage beginning at 2'41", for example; and how chilling is the climax at 9'02", with the orchestra's collective tremolando rattling like bones. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Beethoven

Symphony No 9, 'Choral', Op 125

Rebecca Evans *sop* **Patricia Bardon** *mez* **Robert Murray** *ten* **Derek Welton** *bass-bar* **Philharmonia Chorus and Orchestra / Benjamin Zander**

Brattle Media © (three discs for the price of one)

610877 733781 (59' + 160' • DDD • T/t)

Discs 2 & 3 contain 'Benjamin Zander Discusses Beethoven's Ninth Symphony'



Much as I admire Benjamin Zander's gifts as a musical proselytiser and polemicist, I approached the two discs' worth of discussion that accompany this recording somewhat warily. Two hours and forty minutes? That's a lot of talking. Zander is so fervent, however, that I found

myself engrossed from start to finish. He wisely doesn't concern himself so much with the Ninth's historical background – the late Michael Steinberg's superb booklet note covers that ground – but rather with why he believes the composer's metronome indications and dynamic markings make musical sense.

Zander's argument is wide-ranging and includes copious musical examples, with snippets of recordings by Toscanini, Furtwängler, Bernstein and Norrington, among others. Beginning with the 'least controversial' of the score's 14 metronome markings and working gradually to the most contentious, Zander's reasoning is consistently sensible, scholarly and compelling. By this point, admittedly, many of his ideas are hardly revolutionary. Setting aside his own scrappy account with the Boston Philharmonic (Pickwick, 9/92), recordings by David Zinman (Arte Nova, 7/99) and Philippe Herreweghe (Harmonia Mundi, 6/99) cut a similar interpretative profile. But in explaining his efforts to take the composer at his word, Zander gets to the crux of musical interpretation.

And the performance itself? Well, much of it is quite good, thanks largely to the commitment and collective virtuosity of the Philharmonia. Although the

tension occasionally slackens in the opening movement, the tempestuous climax is ferocious (start at 7'07"); and in the coda, Zander's meticulous attention to the dynamic markings intensifies the music's emotional disquiet (from 11'21"). There's visceral excitement in the *Molto vivace*, which gallops along, agile and animal. The woodwinds even manage to make shapely music in the Trio, despite the breakneck pace. Note, too, how passionately the violins sweep through the elaborately embroidered passage in the *Adagio* at 6'18".

At times, though, a feeling of pedantry creeps in, and particularly in the finale. The jubilant restatement of 'Freude, schöner Götterfunken' at 11'13", for instance, is too hectic. And in the *Allegro energico* (at 15'07"), Zander relentlessly pounds the main beats, as if the *sempre ben marcato* indication trumped all else. Bass-baritone Derek Welton blurs some pitches in his opening recitative but both the solo quartet and the Philharmonia Chorus sing with gusto. It's a pity that so much crucial orchestral detail is buried whenever the chorus sings above *piano*.

Near the end of his discussion, Zander acknowledges that, in realising the composer's metronome marks, the Philharmonia's musicians were 'stretched to the limit', even under studio conditions. Would this even be practicable in a concert? I have a hunch that the *frisson* of a live performance might have helped quite a bit. As it is, Zander's eloquent disquisition is the more satisfying and valuable part of this set. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Richard Rodney Bennett

'Orchestral Works, Vol 2'

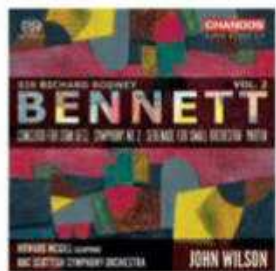
Concerto for Stan Getz^a. Symphony No 2.

Serenade. Partita^b

^aHoward McGill *tsax* ^bScott Dickinson *va*

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / John Wilson

Chandos   CHSA5212 (69' • DDD/DSD)



This is the second volume of John Wilson's 'celebration' (for that's what this series surely is) of Richard Rodney Bennett's manifold gifts as a composer – and once more the choices rejoice in his creative shapeshifting.

The accomplished jazzier is first up. But his *Concerto for Stan Getz* was custom-made to gift the legendary saxophonist a whole new landscape. It was the classical piece he craved but sadly never got to play. Even as the music was being faxed to him (1990) he

was ailing and fading fast. Scored for timpani and strings, this exhilarating work seeks to honour Getz's free spirit while harnessing it to a new-found symphonic rigour. The first sound we hear from the tenor sax soloist (the excellent Howard McGill) is a howl from street level. This is the tough visage that the instrument less often shows us and it plays against a driving insistency in the orchestra.

But the 'nighthawk' crooning is there too, of course, snatching at lyricism, restless to be set free in the cadenza where Bennett finally offered Getz some reflective moments of improvisation. It all points to the swooning enticements of the slow-movement *Elegy* in which Bennett's movie credentials (here decidedly 'noir') proffer a luscious melody most of us would swear we'd heard before even if we hadn't.

Symphony No 2 – written in 1967, at the peak of Bennett's early avant-garde wanderings – is an atonal piece that's damned if it's going to be perceived as such. It's big on dynamic contrasts. The tension between the imperative and the lyric is (like the opening movement of the Concerto) key to its intrigue. It's taut, concise and fizzing with incident, now propulsive, now reflective, now ethereal. Indeed, its still centre is as beautiful as it is ephemeral. Wilson's performance with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra is most accomplished and, more importantly, persuasive, full of atmosphere in those distilled moments.

The remaining works – *Serenade* for small orchestra (1977) and *Partita* (1995) – are brimful of singing diatonic tunes and an air that is uniquely English even when clearly alluding to other nationalities. What Bennett displays in the *Partita* is so redolent of William Walton, not least the viola melody in the super-lush *Lullaby*. There's that ever-present sinuous touch of the exotic. Walton's Mediterranean streak.

But most revealing of all – and perhaps the biggest testament to Bennett's prowess as a composer – is the fact that whether he's flexing his intellectual muscle in the Second Symphony, schmoozing in the Sax Concerto's slow movement or simply having a good time in the *Partita*, this is unmistakably the work of the same composer. **Edward Seckerson**

Berlioz • Turnage

Berlioz *Symphonie fantastique*, Op 14

Turnage *Shadow Walker*^a

^aVadim Repin, ^aDaniel Hope *vns* Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra / Sascha Goetzl

Onyx   ONYX4188 (79' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Musikverein, Vienna, October 23, 2017



In Turnage's double concerto *Shadow Walker*, Vadim Repin and Daniel Hope are

often entwined in canons or reflective gestures but their characteristically brittle sounds are so similar that listening to a recording it's impossible to tell them apart. In basing his piece on the principle of Mark Wallinger's film of the same name, in which the artist videos his own shadow casting itself over parts of Shaftesbury Avenue, Turnage hasn't made things easy for himself; the two soloists are so tightly bound that the orchestra can feel in danger of being frozen out.

Shadow Walker comes good courtesy of Turnage's solving of that problem even more than by his exploration of dual identity in his Siamese-twin soloists. It becomes a piece not about three but about two; while the two violins are doing their thing – antiphonal shamans one minute, best friends on a night out the next – the rhythmic and harmonic subtleties of the orchestra hold the reflective secrets, sometimes fun, sometimes thrilling, sometimes wearied.

The piece was commissioned by the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic and Turnage includes, and very much exploits, Turkish percussion. This is the BIPO's third disc for Onyx and in a sense the most conventional. After the fascinating undertow of *Shadow Walker* we hear a *Symphonie fantastique* that places weight on the double basses as it needs to. We already know this is a fine orchestra given its relative youth, so finesse of ensemble, intonation and solos are to be expected.

Sophistication is a different matter. There are elements of this piece which need to sound dirty or plain (the dirty brass and E flat clarinet of the March to name but two), and do so rather more than on Daniel Harding's recent recording from the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Harding's performance is a little sharper and more defined in terms of precision and colour. Goetzl's is live, alive and uses the orchestra's roots and characteristics to its advantage (there is a fizz in the string body and a depth that's more earthy than aristocratic). He also deploys his own trademark ability to whip up an atmosphere while enacting discipline. In this piece, it works a treat; and, by the sound of the applause from the Musikverein, the Viennese approved. **Andrew Mellor**

Berlioz – selected comparison:

Swedish RSO, Harding (10/16) (HARM) HMC90 2244



Accomplished jazzier: saxophonist Howard McGill works on Richard Rodney Bennett's Concerto for Stan Getz with producer Brian Pidgeon

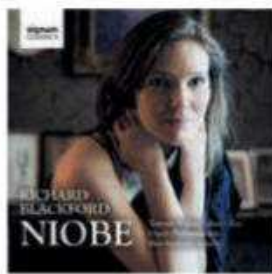
Blackford

Niobe

Tamsin Waley-Cohen *vn*

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Ben Gernon

Signum © SIGCD539 (23' • DDD)



I'd trust the violinist who wedded works by Roy Harris and John Adams on one the most absorbing concerto discs for many years (12/16) to bring us interesting repertoire, and that is exactly what Tamsin Waley-Cohen does here, even if there are some strings attached.

Richard Blackford's *Niobe*, perhaps best described as a symphonic poem with solo violin, tells of the woman who claimed greater respect than the goddess of motherhood, Leto, by virtue of the fact that she had 14 offspring to Leto's two. Niobe had her seven sons and seven daughters killed as punishment before being turned to stone. The link to women of our own time 'cruelly punished for offences of blasphemy, apostasy and non-conformity' (Blackford) works to a point but Niobe's downfall, even if we wouldn't condone the punishment, was surely caused

by a level of hubris that would hardly cause anyone problems today.

Detail, perhaps, but Blackford's score can be similarly disorientating for all its strengths, even if those strengths are wondrous. Each of his four movements is heavily pregnant with narrative tension: a slithering depiction of 'The Lover', a compellingly fraught and strained evocation of 'The Blasphemer', a picture of her heartfelt desperation in 'The Pleader' and a sorrowful final movement, 'The Mourner', in which Blackford's solution to the turning-to-stone – the violin akin to 'an insect struggling in the last seconds of its life', in the composer's words – is a masterstroke.

His writing is thematically concentrated, notably evocative and clearly heartfelt. It is close to Szymanowski in sound and in its solutions in pitting a solo violin against a lustrous orchestra. A particularly lustrous orchestra in this case, the Czech Philharmonic, against which Waley-Cohen's violin tone is characteristically strong and steely, notably in the double-stopped cadenza over a drone in 'The Mourner'. The piece is only 23 minutes long and is the only work you get, which is only a problem if you want it to be.

Andrew Mellor

Brahms

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 15; No 2, Op 83

Vincenzo Maltempo *pf*

Mitteuropa Orchestra / Marco Guidarini

Piano Classics Ⓢ ② PCL10145 (97' • DDD)

Recorded live

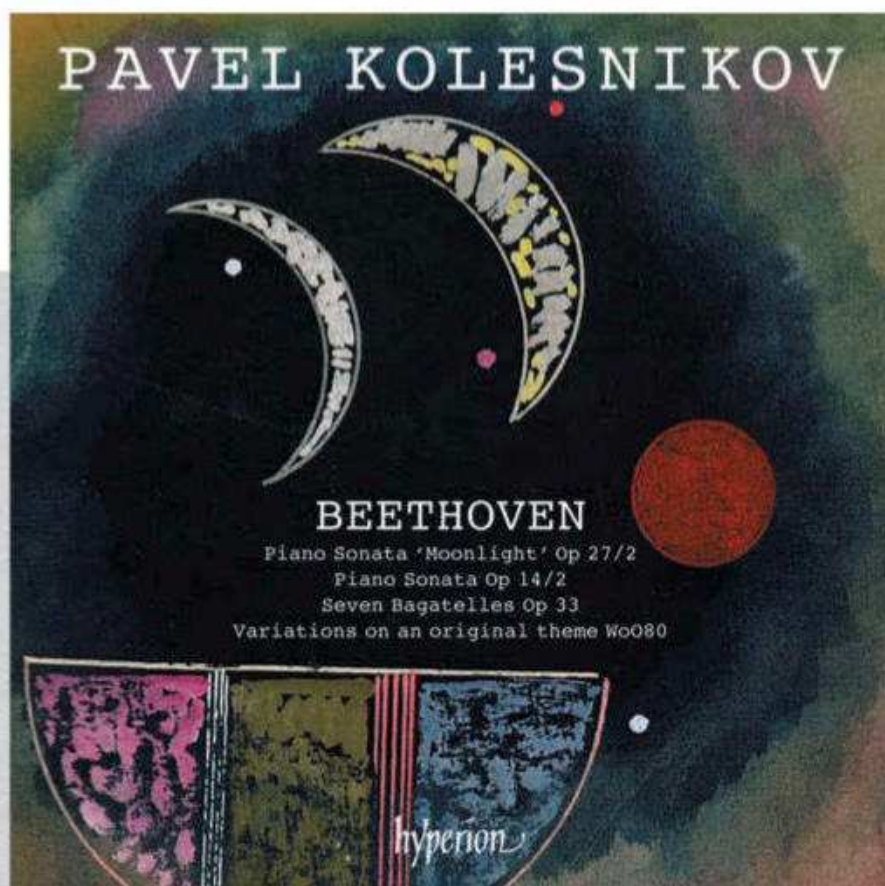


Brendel, Fleisher, Freire, Gilels, Graffman, Hough, Kovacevich, Lewis,

Rubinstein, Serkin: 10 reasons why anyone contemplating recording the Brahms concertos should give pause. That's not to say there haven't been some fine accounts from younger artists coming my way of late, not least Sunwook Kim with Mark Elder and Adam Laloum with Kazuki Yamada. But this one, from Vincenzo Maltempo and the Mitteleuropa Orchestra under Marco Guidarini, doesn't really have enough individuality to make its mark.

Certainly Maltempo has the technique to play both concertos with conviction (not surprising, given that he has made a name for himself playing Alkan, and my esteemed colleague Patrick Rucker much liked his Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, 2/17).

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The 'Moonlight' sonata sounds newly minted in this remarkable reading, Pavel Kolesnikov's hallmark virtues of 'intelligence, sensitivity and imagination' (Gramophone) guaranteeing a very special Beethoven recital indeed.

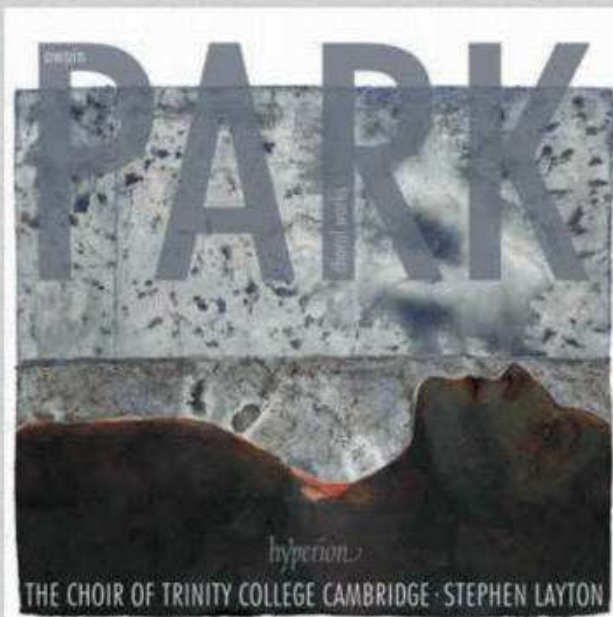
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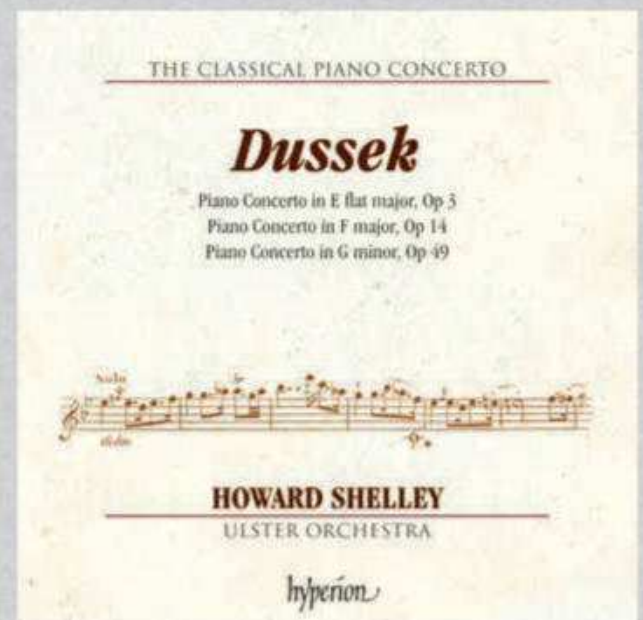
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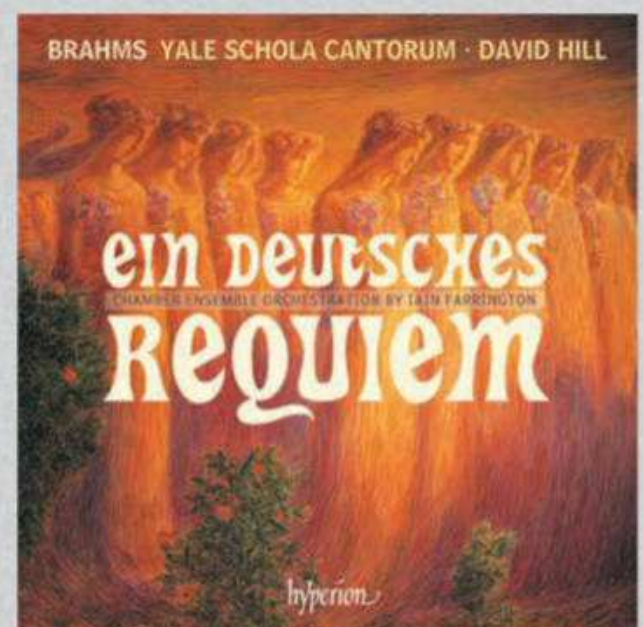
Chopin: Cello Sonata; Schubert: Arpeggione Sonata Steven Isserlis (cello), Dénes Várjon (piano)
Bronsart & Urspruch: Piano Concertos Emmanuel Despax (piano), BBC Scottish SO, Eugene Tzigane (conductor)
Liszt: New Discoveries, Vol. 4 Leslie Howard (piano)
Machaut: The gentle physician The Orlando Consort
Vaughan Williams: A Sea Symphony BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Chorus, Martyn Brabbins
The Passing-Measures Mahan Esfahani (harpsichord)
Févin: Missa Ave Maria & Missa Salve sancta parens The Brabant Ensemble, Stephen Rice (conductor)



Iain Farrington's chamber version of this monumental work is a perfect match for these young voices.

CDA68242
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Brahms:
Ein deutsches Requiem
YALE SCHOLA CANTORUM
DAVID HILL conductor



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But I find a lack of subtlety in his approach in both concertos. In the opening movement of the D minor First, for example, the theme (from 4'48") lacks a sense of line that you find in the finest, while the chordal passage (from 6'15") begins well enough but then Maltempo can't resist overdoing rubato – at least to these ears. The mighty octave-writing also comes across somewhat opaquely.

The orchestra itself is also not that noteworthy – entries are sometimes ragged, the wind is less characterful than some and the beautiful opening of the slow movement passes for relatively little (just hear Harding or Elder here for a masterclass in the shaping of lines). And the closing Rondo doesn't dance as Lewis's does. This movement is also afflicted by various noises off (eg from 0'55").

The horn solo that opens the Second Concerto immediately suggests we're in for a long listen – less a matter of tempo than of phrasing. Again, there's nothing wrong with Maltempo's playing technically – but it doesn't stand out among the myriad versions. The *Allegro appassionato* goes at a decent speed but the accentuation tends to hold up rather than drive matters forwards. The (uncredited) cello soloist in the *Andante* gives it his (or her) all, but again rubato can be a bit overdone in the movement as a whole and the finale is short on grace. Overall, I fear, not competitive.

Harriet Smith

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Fleisher, Cleveland Orch, Szell

(8/64^R) (SONY) MH2K63225

Freire, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch, Chailly

(9/06) (DECC) 475 7637DX2

Kim, Hallé, Elder (6/17) (HALL) CDHLD7546

Piano Concerto No 1 – selected comparison:

Lewis, Swedish RSO, Harding

(5/16) (HARM) HMC90 2191

Bruckner

Symphony No 8 (1890 version, ed Nowak)

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik © 900165 (80' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie im Gasteig,

Munich, November 13-18, 2017

Bruckner • Messiaen

Bruckner Symphony No 8 (1890 version, ed Haas) **Messiaen** *Couleurs de la Cité Céleste*^a

^a**Pierre-Laurent Aimard** *pf*

London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

Video director **Corentin Leconte**

LSO Live © (DVD + Blu-ray) LSO3042 (104' • NTSC •

16:9 • 1080i • 24-bit 48kHz & PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live at the Barbican Hall, London,

April 14, 2016



The music of Bruckner has been increasingly prominent in the repertoire of Mariss Jansons and Simon Rattle over the past decade or so but this is the first time either conductor has recorded the Eighth Symphony with an established orchestra (although a recording of Rattle's 2015 performance with the Australian World Orchestra can be found on ABC Classics.)

Jansons's performance is a notable achievement. Even taking into consideration the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra's long history of Bruckner interpretation, the quality of the playing is exceptional. I'm not sure I've ever heard the symphony's instrumental detail presented with such careful attention to colour, phrasing and balance. The close of the *Adagio* in particular is exquisite, the playing of the first violins over a cushion of horns and Wagner tubas achingly tender and expressive. There's more to a performance than refined playing, however, and Jansons's interpretation also impresses with its command of symphonic structure, traversing the work's complex and varied musical terrain with commitment and authority. The final build-up of tension in the coda of the finale is especially well managed. Jansons's performance might not have the elemental force of Wand at his finest or Haitink with the Staatskapelle Dresden but it impresses on its own terms, and the recording is superb.

Rattle's Barbican performance followed concerts in Luxembourg and Paris and is a dedicated and assured interpretation, although not on the same level as that of Jansons, I feel. The video recording shows Rattle conducting from memory and the LSO, an experienced Bruckner ensemble these days, offer playing of unflagging energy and commitment. Despite Rattle's obvious involvement in the music and his cajoling conducting style, however, the performance misses that last degree of intensity and characterisation that turns a fine performance into an unforgettable one.

Rattle is on firmer ground in Messiaen's *Couleurs de la Cité Céleste*, which follows the symphony on the disc (although in fact it preceded it in the original concert). Rattle's performance conveys the vibrancy and power of Messiaen's 1963 score superbly well, and the control of rhythm and colour is exemplary. The LSO winds and

percussion are on superb form and Pierre-Laurent Aimard's contribution is powerfully incisive. The result stands comparison with Boulez's pioneering 1966 recording with Yvonne Loriod.

LSO Live's presentation helpfully includes both Blu-ray and DVD versions of the concert. Corentin Leconte's video direction is unobtrusive and the picture is extremely clear on the Blu-ray disc I viewed. The sound of the Bruckner performance is warmer and more resonant than we usually hear in recordings from the Barbican. An error in the indexing of both discs means the track for the symphony's *Adagio* starts playing at fig B, approximately three minutes into the movement, rather than the start. **Christian Hoskins**

Bruckner – selected comparison:

Staatskapelle Dresden, Haitink (4/09) (PROF) PH07057

Messiaen – selected comparison:

Loriod, Orch du Domaine Musical, Boulez

(1/67^R) (WARN) 2564 62162-2

Ginastera

'Orchestral Works, Vol 3'

Piano Concerto No 1, Op 28^a. Concierto

argentino^a. Variaciones concertantes, Op 23

^a**Xiayin Wang** *pf*

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Juanjo Mena

Chandos © CHAN10949 (66' • DDD)



João Carlos Martins premiered Ginastera's First Piano Concerto

in 1961 and made the

first recording in 1968 with Leinsdorf and the Boston Symphony (RCA, 1/69) – a percussive, feral performance that deserves reissue. Oscar Tarraga's rhapsodic, romantic reading offered an alternative view (ASV, 9/89). And now we have Xiayan Wang, whose revelatory account of the composer's elusive Second Concerto graced the previous volume in Chandos's Ginastera series (1/17). She does not disappoint here.

There's a mercurial quality in Wang's playing that gives her performance of the First Concerto a markedly choreographic feeling – not balletic, exactly, but sculptural and mobile. In the opening *cadenza accompagnata*, for example, she darts in, out and around increasingly massive orchestral sonorities. The hallucinatory Scherzo is breathtakingly hushed, heightening the sense of vertiginous anxiety. Her finely chiselled, celestially cool tone is coupled with a vice-like rhythmic grip that throws sparks, even at *pianissimo*. And in the Toccata finale, where Martins takes us on a rough ride, nudging the tempo ever so

slightly forwards, Wang is steady, sleek and focused. The result may be less viscerally thrilling but the cumulative effect is still terrifically satisfying.

Ginastera wrote the *Concierto argentino* in 1935 (he was 19), then withdrew the score after its first performance. I think I understand why. Despite the music's brilliant orchestral textures and folkloric charms, the overall structure feels loose and the finale is notably less inspired than the preceding movements. Still, there's plenty to delight the ear, particularly in this playful, affectionately detailed performance. Try at 6'06" in the first-movement cadenza, say, where Wang made me certain that the teenage Ginastera had got his hands on recordings by stride pianists like James P Johnson and Earl Hines.

The BBC Philharmonic have gone from strength to strength in this series. They are superb, idiomatic partners for Wang in the concertos and have the opportunity for their own virtuoso display in the *Variaciones concertantes* (1953). I find this the most gratifying and lovable of all Ginastera's orchestral works. Here, the folkloric elements are fully absorbed into his personal idiom and the variations are vividly characterised, harmonically piquant and exquisitely coloured. Mena's reading is refined yet full of subtle feeling and the recorded sound is spectacular.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Korngold • Mozart

Korngold Violin Concerto, Op 35

Mozart Violin Concerto No 5, K219

Caroline Goulding *vn*

Berne Symphony Orchestra / Kevin John Edusei

Claves © 50-1808 (54' • DDD)



Has any popular violin concerto had a shakier start in life than Korngold's? Born

into a post-war America where critics (if not audiences) were newly allergic to romanticism, it also had the mixed blessing of a premiere recording by Heifetz: glorious in its way, but hugely influential and the basis of a performance tradition that hasn't always served the music well. Enjoyable though it can be to hear this bittersweet song of exile performed with mile-wide vibrato and Beverly Hills lushness, it isn't – or shouldn't be – the only way.

Caroline Goulding and Kevin John Edusei follow the recent, *Gramophone* Award-winning path of Vilde Frang,

among others: toning down the technicolour and emphasising the music's Viennese roots. Goulding, a laureate of the *Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad* has a fine, sweet but penetrating tone. She shapes phrases expressively but never overdoes the (fairly generous) rubato that Korngold has already written into the score; Edusei and his Berne orchestra respond alertly. It helps that Goulding isn't over-miked (often a temptation in this concerto): she's realistically placed against an almost Impressionist orchestral soundscape, in which the harps and tuned percussion seem at times almost to melt into the texture. While the finale certainly sparkles, the result, overall, feels like a real conversation.

Mozart's 'Turkish' Concerto makes an appropriate pairing – two Austrian wunderkinds together – and Edusei lays down big, bright *tuttis* (the horns are positively swashbuckling) against which Goulding sings and dances with nonchalant grace, and peacocks magnificently in the first movement's (unattributed) cadenza. It's very different in outlook and sound world from Isabelle Faust's recent approach to Mozart (*Harmonia Mundi*, 12/16) – but in this pairing it should give a lot of pleasure on its own splendidly assured terms. **Richard Bratby**

Martinsson

AS in memoriam, Op 50b^a. Concerto for Orchestra, Op 81^b. Open Mind, Op 71^a. Orchestral Songs on Poems by Emily Dickinson, Op 82a^c

©Lisa Larsson *sop* Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra / ^aAndrew Manze, ^bSakari Oramo
BIS © BIS2133 (73' • DDD/DSD • T)



Yet again we are faced with recurrent questions surrounding stylistic ethics and the exclusivity of music about music. Rolf Martinsson's *AS* [Arnold Schoenberg] *in memoriam* (1999) aims to reflect the 'style, gesture and musical character' of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*, written exactly 100 years earlier. As a pastiche, it's a triumph of fluid, convincing mimicry. To listen to, it's gorgeous, calorific and disorientating. As an artwork, it's somewhere between questionable and pointless.

In his Concerto for Orchestra, Martinsson quotes the three other works included on the disc (and many more from his own pen) as well as making extensive use of Golaud's theme from Schoenberg's *Pelléas und Mélisande*. On the former point, fair enough: the piece was written for one

of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra's immersion weekends when lots of other Martinsson scores were played. But beyond Sweden and indeed that weekend, doesn't the gesture freeze us out?

As for *Pelléas*, Golaud's music pings out of the texture with such wondrousness – with its burdened harmonies, raging angst and intoxicating melodiousness – that when it departs again you notice the comparative lack of character. Despite some wondrously skilful orchestral writing, it's a problematic piece when so much of its supposedly personal feelings are filtered through another person's. If the idea is to listen more technically, *Pelléas*'s presence makes that impossible.

Martinsson's *Orchestral Songs on Poems by Emily Dickinson* sit somewhere between Sondheim, Korngold at his most syrupy and Disney songs. Even if you've little regard for any of those stylistic reference points, it's hard to deny that these are the most intriguing works on the disc – orchestrated with true subtlety and delivered with a delectable feline poise by Lisa Larsson that proves their 'singability'. Martinsson reacts as directly as the punters would expect when faced with words like 'squirrel' and 'thunder'. But he throws in the odd non sequitur too, as on the word 'harmony'. Otherwise, there is no question of Martinsson ever taking a hard route when he can take an easy one – the songwriter's art, if not the composer's. The concert overture *Open Mind* is a thrilling showpiece and a great advert for the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic's slick virtuosity. But its central, slow section really reminds you of someone else ... yes, that's it: early Schoenberg. **Andrew Mellor**

Mendelssohn • Tchaikovsky

Mendelssohn A Midsummer Night's Dream,

Opp 21 & 61 Tchaikovsky Manfred, Op 58

Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly

Video director Michael Beyer

Accentus © ACC20438; © ACC10438
(100' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live at the Concert Hall of KKL Luzern, August 2017



Riccardo Chailly's debut as Music Director of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra in 2016 was Mahler's gigantic Eighth Symphony, completing the critically acclaimed cycle of his predecessor, friend and mentor Claudio Abbado. A highlight



Classy performances: Riccardo Chailly directs the Lucerne Festival Orchestra in beautifully sculpted accounts of Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky

of Chailly's second Lucerne season is the concert on this Accentus disc pairing the Bard and Byron, featuring Mendelssohn's Overture and movements from his incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Tchaikovsky's *Manfred*.

Although made up of players drawn from top orchestras, including an understandable recent influx from Chailly's Filarmonica della Scala, many have been happy visitors to Lucerne for years, some since its birth under Abbado in 2003. The LFO strings include Wolfram Christ, principal viola of the Berlin Philharmonic, and a host of Hagens, while the sparkling woodwind line-up is headed by flautist Jacques Zoon and Santa Cecilia clarinetist Alessandro Carbonare.

Together they make a classy sound, and these are classy performances. Chailly's Mendelssohn is affectionate, reflecting his time as principal conductor at the Leipzig Gewandhaus. The Overture is lovingly shaped, while the Scherzo is highly engaging, properly bracing in places, very attentive to dynamics. Alessio Allegrini provides rock-solid horn-playing in the Nocturne and the Wedding March has celebratory pomp.

Similarly, *Manfred* is treated to a beautifully sculpted account, although

Chailly doesn't really whip the score up to the frenzied heights of some readings, quelling some of the symphony's inner turmoil. He gets polished playing from the LFO, woodwinds once again a delight. The biggest disappointment comes at the end with a damp squib of an organ entry in the orgiastic finale. But, sycophantic booklet note aside, this is an enjoyable release of what was obviously an enjoyable concert. **Mark Pullinger**

Mozart

Ch'io mi scordi di te ... Non temer, amato bene, K505^a. Idomeneo - Overture. Non più, tutto ascoltai ... Non temer, amato bene, K490^b. Piano Concerto No 25, K503^c. Symphony No 40, K550

^{ab} **Jessye Norman** *sop* ^b **Hugh Maguire** *vn*

^{ac} **Alfred Brendel** *pf* **Academy of St Martin**

in the Fields / Neville Marriner

Decca Eloquence © ② ELQ482 8705 (87' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Palais de la Musique et des Congrès, Strasbourg, January 27, 1978

From Philips ● 6768 050 (11/78)



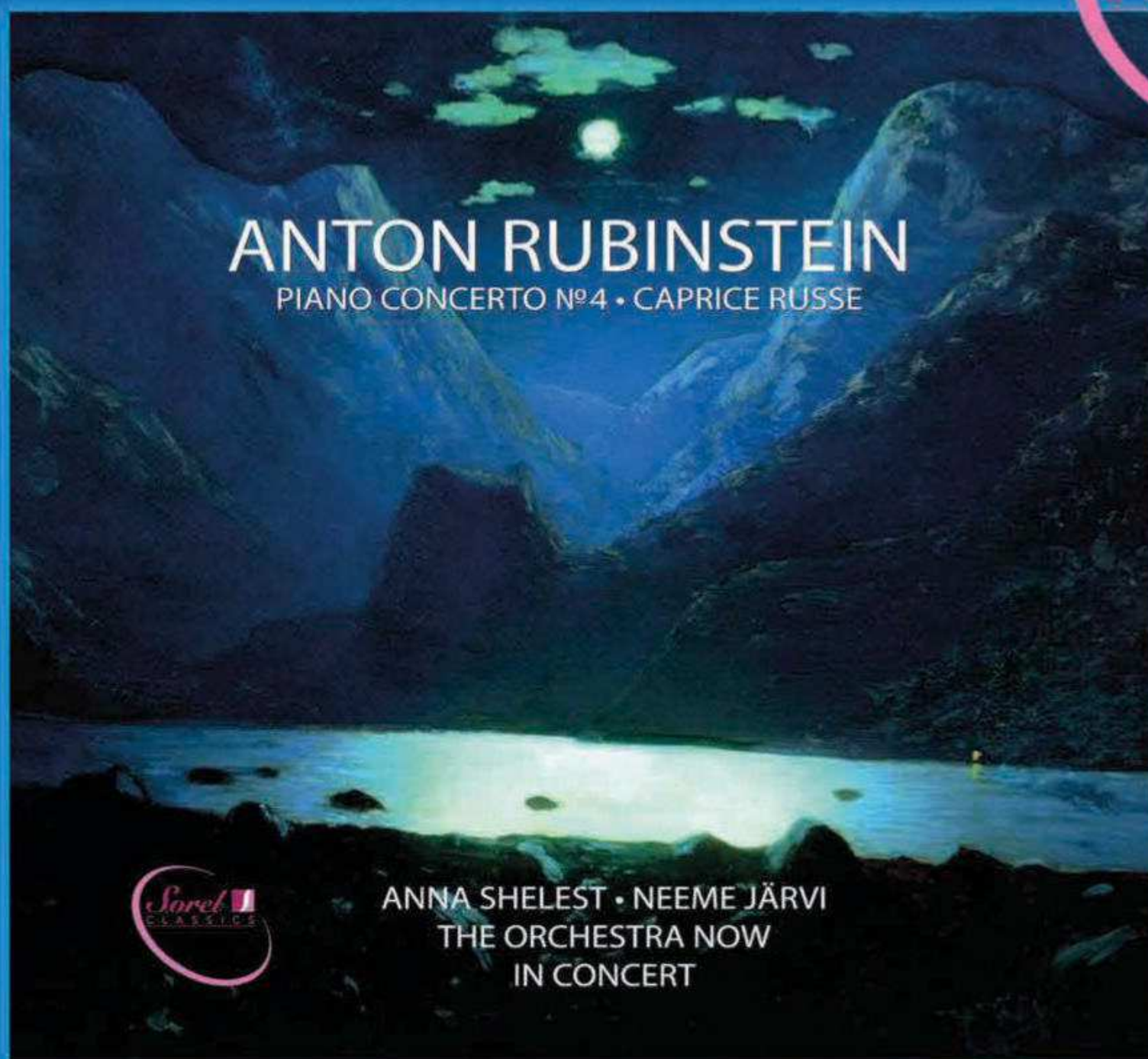
Could there have been a touch of Brendel-inspired whimsy about the

idea of a concert marking the 222nd anniversary of Mozart's birth? Whoever came up with the jest, it was that triple two which provided the cue for this gala evening in Strasbourg in 1978 in aid of the Musicians' International Mutual Aid Fund. The concert was released on a pair of Philips LPs in November 1978. The performance of the C major Piano Concerto would later be incorporated into Brendel's complete cycle of the Mozart keyboard concertos but this is the first time this well-recorded event has appeared on CD.

The programme was *Idomeneo*-themed.

It was rare for Mozart to reconfigure major works but in Vienna in March 1786, seven weeks before the premiere of *Le nozze di Figaro*, he oversaw a semi-professional revival of *Idomeneo*, for which he made significant alterations and provided additional music. This included a recitative and aria, probably intended for the start of Act 3, in which Ilia suspects Idamante of infidelity.

That addition itself inspired a new composition in December 1786, when a more or less identical text was used by Mozart to create his concert aria 'Ch'io mi scordi di te', a glorious piece for soprano, winds, strings and piano



ANTON RUBINSTEIN

Piano Concerto No. 4 in D minor, Op. 70 · Caprice russe, Op. 102

Anna Shelest · Neeme Järvi · The Orchestra Now

Live at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theater, New York City

The first release in a series of recordings featuring Anton Rubinstein's works for piano and orchestra with Neeme Järvi and Anna Shelest.



obbligato. The fact that Mozart wrote the piece for the 21-year-old Nancy Storace, his first Susanna in *Figaro*, with himself as pianist, has inevitably led to speculation that it was a private love-duet in concert form.

The C major Concerto, which sports an echo of *Idomeneo* in its finale, also had its premiere in December 1786, as did the *Prague* Symphony. This was originally intended to be part of the Strasbourg programme but ‘had to be changed’, producer Erik Smith mysteriously records. This is a pity. The substituted work, Mozart’s late G minor Symphony heard in a performance that is nicely groomed but never especially remarkable, becomes a bit of a red herring.

The concert’s opening sequence works beautifully, as we move seamlessly from the *Idomeneo* Overture, through the superb recitative which begins the newly added 1786 scena, to the lovely aria with violin obbligato ‘Non temer, amato bene’. With Jessye Norman somewhere near her vocal and theatrical best, and lovely solo playing from Hugh Maguire, Marriner’s former colleague and leader at the LSO, this is well worth disinterring.

In the Nancy Storace concert aria, alas, Norman seems chilly and uncertain, picking her way through the notes in a way that rather subverts the idea that this is Mozart at his emotionally, not to say erotically charged best. Here Mozart’s admirers, and Brendel’s, would be better advised to seek out the wonderful recording Brendel made 10 years earlier with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf accompanied by Szell and the LSO (EMI, 3/70).

The merits of the fine performance of the C major Concerto, with which the concert ends, are well known. Had this been a studio recording, I suspect that the first page or two after the piano’s initial entry might have been remade, when the players had ‘warmed up’, so to speak. But the wonder of live music-making is that it has its own trajectories and agendas, as here in a performance that grows in stature and goes on growing. The slow movement is especially memorable, profoundly felt. It is also ornamented, where required, in a way that strikes a perfect balance between austerity and elaboration. **Richard Osborne**

Pärt

Symphonies – No 1, ‘Polyphonic’;
No 2; No 3; No 4, ‘Los Angeles’

NFM Wrocław Philharmonic Orchestra /
Tõnu Kaljuste
ECM New Series © 481 6802 (79’ • DDD)



‘Symphonist’ is not a description often applied to Arvo Pärt. Yet the four works

contained on this disc (three of which predate the composer’s distinctive ‘Tintinnabuli’ style) form important landmarks along a journey that is revealed to be neither straightforward nor easy.

This struggle is first set out in the experimental, exploratory Symphony No 1. Written towards the end of Pärt’s studies at the Tallinn State Conservatory with Heino Eller, the composer is seemingly caught between the need to pay lip service to the avant-garde (in the form of chromaticism and atonality) and his desire to dig deep into the musical past for answers. It’s an uneasy dichotomy that drives much of Pärt’s music from the 1960s. Whereas the past is represented through canons, passacaglias, preludes and fugues in the Symphony No 1, it appears in the form of a simple quotation towards the end of the Symphony No 2. An edgier, more pointillistic sound world is presented at the beginning of the work, however, which soon gets caught up in dense, saturated, chromatic clouds of sound that push the music ever closer towards atonal atrophy and fragmentation. Salvation arrives unexpectedly in the form of the aforementioned quote from Tchaikovsky’s *Album for the Young* – a desperate clinging-on to lost innocence among the chaos. It’s a moment just as unsettling as Pärt’s use of JS Bach’s C major Prelude in his *Credo* two years later.

Composed in 1971, the Symphony No 3’s more openly tonal style draws it closer to the more recognisable sound world of No 4, some 35 years later. Subtitled *Los Angeles*, the Fourth adopts a method used in other instrumental works whereby Pärt sets a sacred song with the words omitted – the hidden text providing both structural stability and emotional sustenance. There’s also a degree of tension here not always encountered in Pärt that imparts a stronger sense of the ‘symphonic’ to the music.

The Fourth’s large-scale architectural dimensions are perfectly shaped and proportioned in the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic’s performance under Tõnu Kaljuste, which does not suffer the curse of quiet music recorded live in a packed and highly resonant concert hall, as was the case with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los

Angeles Philharmonic (ECM, A/10). Perhaps, as in Pärt’s set of symphonies, the journey is more interesting than the destination itself. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Qin

Echoes from the Other Shore^a. The Nature’s Dialogue. Across the Skies^b. Lonely Song

^aWei Ji zheng ^bWeiwei Lan pipa

ORF Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Gottfried Rabl
Kairos © 0015032KAI (66’ • DDD)



From Debussy on, Western composers have sought inspiration from

non-Western instruments. In the past couple of decades, this tendency has seen spectralist composers explore in detail the microtonal potential of ethnic instruments. Enter Wenchen Qin, one of China’s most eminent composers, who in two concertos on this disc combines spectralist harmonies and traditional Chinese instruments to create novel takes on the concerto form.

Echoes from the Other Shore (2015) is a single-movement concerto for zheng, an Asian plucked string instrument that sounds at times like a cimbalom. The hushed opening section, where sparse zheng sounds alongside gongs, bells and string clusters, suggests a ceremonial atmosphere. As things progress, we get a relatively conventional dramatic arc, as the soloist’s initially subdued utterances eventually battle against orchestral tumult. On the whole, Qin uses the orchestra in a restrained way and there are marvellous textural contrasts. *Across the Skies* (2012), a concerto for pipa, similarly brims over with mystery and imagination. The lute-like instrument’s violent gestures produce resonant harmonics, conjuring a backdrop of stacked perfect fifth chords on strings; these shimmering string harmonics in turn open a space in which, as the piece progresses, the pipa’s rhythmic strikes develop into a sonorous dance.

The composer’s aim in *The Nature’s Dialogue* (2010) for orchestra and tape is to inspire ‘reverence for nature and art’. After an opening fanfare of a series of quasi-spectral chords, the orchestra is joined by myriad electronic samples of chirps, croaks, cicadas and other natural phenomena. Shrill Sciarrino-esque wind and violin flourishes imitate these samples, creating an immersive forest canopy of sounds. In truth, such a literal description does no justice to the music’s imaginative magic. *Lonely Song* (1990/2015) for string orchestra, in its massed glissandos and

clouds of pizzicato, is a more orthodox cousin of the late-1950s orchestral music of Xenakis and Cerha.

This is the second disc of Qin's music to appear, after a Naxos release of some concertos last year. Qin is excellently served by the Vienna Radio orchestra, whose energetic renderings are vividly captured, and by the outstanding soloists.

Liam Cagney

Shostakovich

Symphonies – No 4, Op 43; No 10, Op 93

Russian National Orchestra / Mikhail Pletnev

Pentatone (M) ② PTC5186 647 (133' • DDD/DSD)



You would expect Pletnev – a complicated and elusive character at the best of times – to offer a radical rethink of the renegade Fourth Symphony. And he does. Whether it works or not is another matter entirely and I suspect that only diehard collectors of the wayward and eccentric will respond positively to it. At almost 75 minutes it's probably the longest account on disc – an indication of Pletnev's inquisitive nature and his tendency, indeed desire, to lose himself in the otherworldliness of this awfully big adventure. Shostakovich at some kind of crossroads.

The opening flourishes (rousing cheers or collective panic?) are oddly muted, the ensuing march almost comically deliberate. The tune sounds even more facile at this tempo (a point worth making) but I'd have thought that Pletnev would want to underline that with more, not less from the xylophone (it has the tune after all), which is barely present in this mix. Taking the longer view of this sprawling first movement, it's almost as if Pletnev wants to play down its structural rigour in favour of the uncertainty of where the music might decide to go next. Again, you could argue, a point worth making.

The slower tempos certainly draw attention to all the work's anomalies, making it sound more, not less episodic, while also accentuating its searching nature. The best of this performance happens when the music is quietly mysterious – lost in time and space. The long lyric passage which comes in the wake of the introduction is truly strange and beautiful. One hears distant premonitions of the Fifth Symphony. Equally affecting is the painful oboe solo of the coda, poetically recalling a motif one might have thought of little consequence.

The price one pays for Pletnev's deliberation is a lack of tautness, of edge, of cynicism. In the second movement the tempo-marking *Moderato* seems to mean something else entirely to Pletnev. But it's not just the tempo but the woozy, heavy-limbed impression it conveys that I find disconcerting. It's high on something or other and presumably it's that hallucinatory, spaced-out quality that Pletnev wants to sustain right through to the iconic ticking percussion at the close. Clearly I'm trying very hard to give him the benefit of all my doubts.

An odd one, then. Time and again my listening notes refer to the need for keener focus and the edge which Pletnev and the highly cultivated Russian National Orchestra seem to deny rhythm and accenting. It diminishes the pungency of the circus-like divertissements in the third movement and blunts the impact of the huge anti-heroic climax towards the close, where timpani and horns are hopelessly reticent.

That rather fleshy, well-upholstered sound proves equally inappropriate as we step furtively into the shadowy opening pages of the Tenth Symphony. This pairing, of course, is all about Stalin's all-pervasive climate of fear and loathing, and Shostakovich's creative response to it. Some regard the Tenth as his finest work and Pletnev certainly unfolds it with both reverence and cohesion. But there's something about this almost Karajan-like plushness that diminishes the power of the message. Yes, there is the poetry of anxiety in those bass woodwind chorales and desolate piccolos in the coda, but the central climax is more monumental than it is trenchant and again trumpets and horns make little impression. The Scherzo's lean and ferocious depiction of Stalin's brutal legacy is well regimented but never dangerous. Where is the coarse military 'rattle' of the side drum, the snap and roar of trombones? Virtuosity is one thing (this orchestra has it in spades) but if punches are pulled in the characterisation then we are nowhere dramatically. Just compare Nelsons and the Boston Symphony in this movement, indeed this symphony. Hair-raising.

And if we are seriously meant to feel the release of Stalin's passing in the delirious coda of the finale – the composer's musical monogram DSCH punching the air – then we certainly won't do so with horns this feeble and rampant rhythms sounding like the message hasn't yet come through that he's gone.

Nelsons for the Tenth and Petrenko and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, or indeed Nelsons again (see below), for the Fourth. **Edward Seckerson**

Symphony No 4 – selected comparison:

RLPO, V Petrenko

(11/13) (NAXO) 8 573188 or 8 501111

Symphony No 10 – selected comparison:

Boston SO, Nelsons (8/15) (DG) 479 50559GH

Shostakovich

Symphonies – No 4, Op 43^a;

No 11, 'The Year 1905', Op 103^b

Boston Symphony Orchestra / Andris Nelsons

DG (M) ② 483 5220GH2 (127' • DDD)

Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Boston,

^bSeptember & October 2017; ^aMarch & April 2018



This Nelsons cycle started with a bang – namely the most electrifying recording

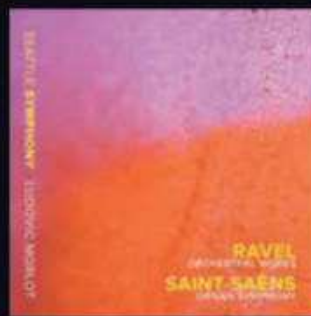
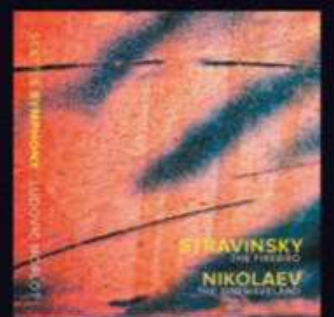
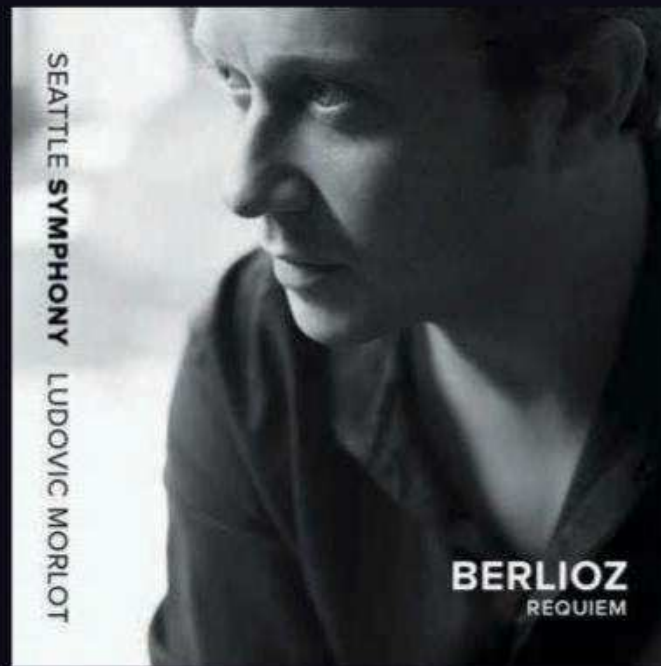
of the Tenth Symphony we've had in almost half a century. The excellence continues. In dramatic contrast to Mikhail Pletnev's intriguing but decidedly odd account of the Fourth Symphony (see above), Nelsons roars into the opening march with a lethal precision that makes Pletnev sound positively flabby. Where Pletnev plainly had a point to make about the crass inanity of that march, there is nothing funny about Nelsons's vigorous goose-step. In fact, over the course of the first movement Nelsons shaves almost eight minutes off Pletnev's 34-minute running time.

Put bluntly, if you can't see the wood for the trees in this first movement then you lose all sense of its symphonic imperative. Nelsons rejoices in the skewed logic and dotty tangents but does so with a gripping hold on the symphonic argument – tentative though that sometimes is. The impetus and tautness of his account intensify cohesion. And it is fabulously engineered: a very real sense of the famed Boston Symphony Hall acoustic in depth and perspective but with a startling clarity and immediacy, all that hyperactive percussion and Mahlerian brass really making its presence felt.

And it surprises in that inimitable Nelsons way. The distracted string fugue that springs from nowhere at the heart of the first movement is truly a panic attack tearing off at a tempo at the very edge of possibility.

A keen sense of irony pervades, too: that curious second movement culminating in that eerie ticking percussion, the grim bathos of the third-

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movement funeral march with its pall-bearing bassoons, the *Petrushka*-like divertissements which are here such an unsettling departure because Nelsons makes them so insanely charming (yes, even the solo trombone's earnest arioso). Of course (and this will have irritated Stalin's henchmen as surely as the work's 'radicalism'), the final timpani-driven climax (thrillingly terraced) could hardly be more anti-heroic. Nelsons gets that. And he surely gets the inconsolably desolate coda, too, the icy celesta aimlessly repeating the same phrase over and over.

Symphony No 11, *The Year 1905* (probably my favourite of the cycle, for all kinds of reasons), seems to start where the Fourth left off – yet another winter of discontent in Russia's troubled history. This failed revolution prompts such fervour from the composer (unapologetically pictorial it may be but it is deeply and disarmingly spiritual, too); and what moves me above all is the way in which his choice of simple revolutionary songs that make up the thematic fabric of the piece keep faith with the cause through trauma after trauma.

Nelsons makes the icy chordings of the opening tableau – 'The Palace Square' – sound almost hymnlike, the recollection of two prison songs intensifying the pathos of a movement with so little and yet so much on the page. The violent disruptions of 'The Ninth of January' are suitably seismic – not least the ferocious fugue (again pushed to extremes of tempo) which unleashes the 'Bloody Sunday' carnage. The rising chromatic trombones sneer so malevolently, the sabre-rattling percussion tattoo is implacable and the shimmer of 'silence' which is left hanging in its wake induces a flicker of disbelief in one's ears.

The power of this music is in its directness, its subtext, its emotional memory. And the sombre processional invoking 'Eternal Memory' – the emotional heart of the symphony – could hardly be truer to everything that gives it its universal appeal. The way in which the music turns harmonically towards its gloriously consonant and affirmative climax is just one instance of the composer telling you exactly what he is feeling. The hopefulness is inescapable. But so is the heartache.

Nelsons, of course, could hardly be more rhythmically incisive, as he and his magnificent orchestra (gosh, he has transformed the Boston Symphony in such a relatively short space of time) march for the cause in the finale. But then comes that

long cor anglais oration (the instrument stretching painfully into its highest register) summing up all the heartache that has gone before and will surely come again; and the shadow of Mussorgsky's *Boris* looms as the unrest seethes again and the dissonant major/minor clang of bells – terrifically vivid here – are at one and the same time a call to arms and a death knell for the Motherland. Thrilling music, thrillingly realised. **Edward Seckerson**

Sibelius • Stravinsky • Lu Pei

Lu Pei Drama: Beijing Opera **Sibelius** Violin Concerto, Op 47^a **Stravinsky** Violin Concerto^a **Zhi-Jong Wang** *vn*

^a**Philharmonia Orchestra / Thomas Sanderling** Accentus © ACC30430 (63' • DDD)



The Chinese violinist Zhi-Jong Wang made her debut at the age

of 14 under Yehudi Menuhin and later won First Prize in the 1998 Yehudi Menuhin International Competition. Despite a Lucerne Festival recital, she doesn't have a high-profile career in the West and is currently Associate Professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Her new disc pairs contrasting concertos from the beginning of the 20th century – one in D minor, one in D major. In the booklet interview, Wang talks about Sibelius's Violin Concerto being dark and introverted, while she sees the Stravinsky as exciting, laced with irony, integrated into the orchestra like a Baroque concerto grosso. It makes for a refreshing programme.

There's less of an icy chill about the opening to the Sibelius than other recent accounts from Jennifer Pike and Vilde Frang. Wang is lyrical, placed well in front of the Philharmonia, offering trusty but unexciting support under Michael Sanderling. She paces the opening *Allegro moderato* steadily, with secure technical playing but without whipping up too much excitement. There is tremendous warmth in the *Adagio*, a little schmaltzy perhaps, before a finale that errs on the side of caution.

Wang's Stravinsky is stronger than her Sibelius. There's punch and pungency to her playing, and she clearly enjoys herself in the opening Toccata, while Aria I is taken at a good lick. Hilary Hahn finds more fun in the fourth-movement Capriccio – Wang is a little pedestrian here – but this is a fine account. She closes the disc with a solo by Lu Pei entitled

Drama: Beijing Opera, which has a haunting, if not particularly Chinese quality, sensitively played. **Mark Pullinger**

Sibelius – selected comparisons:

Frang, WDR SO, Cologne, Søndergård

(4/10) (EMI/WARN) 684413-2

Pike, Bergen PO, A Davis (4/14) (CHAN) CHSA5134

Stravinsky – selected comparison:

Hahn, ASMF, Marriner (1/02) (SONY) SK89649

R Strauss

Eine Alpensinfonie, Op 64^a. Salome – Dance of the Seven Veils^b. Die Frau ohne Schatten – exsc^c **London Philharmonic Orchestra /**

Vladimir Jurowski

LPO © ② LPO0106 (102' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, ^bSeptember 26, 2012; ^cJanuary 19, 2013; ^aApril 30, 2016



As a peak of the orchestral repertoire, Strauss's *Alpine Symphony* is in danger

of becoming overrun: it's a work that orchestras and conductors seem ever more keen (and able) to conquer. Straussians will no doubt be intrigued to hear this new version, though, capturing the LPO and Vladimir Jurowski live at the Royal Festival Hall a couple of years ago.

Experienced in the hall it was an impressive achievement, with Jurowski bringing his usual analytical ear and architectural eye to a swift account of the score, and it proves so on record too. He's certainly a reliable guide: no-nonsense, level-headed, occasionally almost stoic. There are many fine things that come as a result, with a remarkable level of detail to be heard in Strauss's multi-stranded score – executed with remarkable accuracy by the orchestra.

You'll rarely hear the Storm better played or controlled, for example, and Jurowski's sophisticated musicianship is in evidence throughout. There's some fine individual work from the players, too, with a moving oboe solo at the summit. But elsewhere I missed the warmth – both in the lean sound of the orchestra and in Jurowski's approach more generally – and the necessary glow in the final pages. The sound is a bit dry but this is a fine account nonetheless.

The couplings here are a bit more of a mixed bag. *Salome*'s Dance of the Seven Veils could hardly be further away, aesthetically, from the other works featured, and receives a performance here that's well played, focusing more on wiry modernism than on seductiveness.

Jurowski's own suite of extracts from *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (contemporary with the symphony) is an odd beast – maybe no worse than the spurious *Fantasie* on the opera but hardly less arbitrary and stop-start.

As a quick look through the track titles will reveal, it's strangely balanced. We have large swathes of the beautiful final scene of Act 1 but then only a cruelly chopped version of the opera's finale. There's no 'Mir anvertraut' (a highlight in the standard *Fantasie*) but we do get the introduction to the Kaiserin's 'Vater, bist du's', one of the score's glories. There's fine cello work from Kristina Blaumane in the corresponding introduction to the Kaiser's aria in Act 2, although I wish we'd had the transition that precedes it too.

Jurowski knows the score well (he's conducted it several times in the theatre) and he draws outstanding playing from the orchestra. There's a wealth of great music here, of course, but it makes little sense musically and dramatically: I just found myself wanting to return to the full opera. **Hugo Shirley**

Tchaikovsky · Dvořák

Dvořák Romance, Op 11 B39

Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, Op 35

Benjamin Schmid *vn* Pannon Philharmonic

Orchestra, Pécs / Tibor Bogányi

Oehms © OC467 (46' • DDD)



I'm frankly astonished by how seldom performers adhere to the letter of

Tchaikovsky's score to his Violin Concerto, as if the composer's markings were mere suggestions. So I was heartened to read Benjamin Schmid's booklet note, explaining some finer points of his interpretation: how in the finale, for example, he (rightly) differentiates between the *meno mosso* at 1'44" and the subsequent *molto meno mosso* at 2'29", and how he plays that same movement's introductory cadenza in tempo, giving the impression the violinist 'has not yet noticed that the orchestra has left him alone'.

Yet with such thought and care given to these details, I found it particularly frustrating that Schmid and his colleagues ignored many others. In the first movement, say, why not respect the *poco più lento* marking four bars after the *più mosso* at 5'12", as Christian Tetzlaff does so convincingly? And why does Tibor

Bogányi push the tempo forwards at the beginning of the development section, rather than returning to *Moderato assai*, as printed? Vladimir Ashkenazy (with both James Ehnes and Esther Yoo) demonstrates how pulling back here creates a sense of *Onegin*-like pomp and opulence that's more memorable than a simple adrenalin rush.

Still, this is an attractive account overall. Schmid conveys an overarching sense of continuity and flow without sacrificing spontaneity. His wiry, tensile tone occasionally splinters into scratchiness – as in that aforementioned *più mosso* passage at 5'12" – although surprisingly not in the breakneck pace of the finale, where he's thrillingly agile and articulate, sometimes leaving the Pécs-based Pannon Philharmonic scrambling to keep up. His veiled tone is lovely in the darkly coloured Canzonetta, even if the pacing is not quite as fluid as Tchaikovsky's *Andante* marking suggests. Dvořák's nocturnal Romance is similarly atmospheric, if also a bit too relaxed, and rather an ungenerous coupling. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Tchaikovsky – selected comparisons:

Tetzlaff, Russian Nat Orch, Nagano

(2/04) (PENT) PTC5186 022

Ehnes, Sydney SO, Ashkenazy (3/12) (ONYX) ONYX4076

Yoo, Philb Orch, Ashkenazy (8/17) (DG) 481 5032

Tchaikovsky

Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique', Op 74

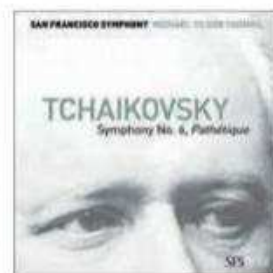
San Francisco Symphony Orchestra /

Michael Tilson Thomas

SFS Media © SFS0072 (49' • DDD)

Recorded live at Davies Symphony Hall,

San Francisco, March 1-4, 2017



Here's a middle-of-the-road interpretation of a work that's anything but. Indeed,

the *Pathétique* is so emotionally charged and structurally daring that it's perhaps the most transgressive symphony in the standard repertory. Tchaikovsky makes it patently clear, through abundant performance directives and expressive markings, that this is music of extremes and defied expectations. That's not what we get on this live recording from the San Francisco Symphony. Here, the stark contrasts are attenuated and the irregularities ironed out, resulting in a *Pathétique* that's far too comfortable.

The strings of the SFS play the first movement's famous lyrical tune quite beautifully, for example, but why does Tilson Thomas make so little of the

incalzando and *ritenuto* markings? Surely Tchaikovsky wants a tidal-strength ebb and flow in this passage, not becalmed seas. And then why anticipate the brief rallentando in the *Moderato assai* (at 8'24") – which, by the way, should flow more easily than the preceding *Andante*, but doesn't – by a good seven bars, so we're sinking in quicksand rather than being carried out with the current?

Tilson Thomas narrows the music's extraordinary dynamic range, too. The cataclysm at 14'54" is a round, full, *fortissimo* here, not the bone-crushing *fortississimo* Tchaikovsky demands. And just as the devotional D major theme at 3'02" in the finale is closer to a crooning *forte* than an intimate *pianissimo*, there are also no painful *sforzando* (*sfz*) spasms when this theme returns, now in B minor, near the end (at 9'33").

As for the middle movements: the lopsided waltz is brightly lit and easy-going, with no hint of ungainliness, despite its odd 5/4 time signature, while the march is played very deliberately, with clean articulation emphasised over verve and effervescence. There's also precious little true *piano* playing in the latter, so the dramatic dynamic shifts – like a cinematographer zooming in and out – are flattened.

I have a few interpretative quibbles with Currentzis's blistering account of the *Pathétique* but his orchestra play as if every note were a matter of life or death. And then there's Bychkov, who digs deeply while remaining scrupulously faithful to the score. Tilson Thomas plays it relatively safe, and this music demands so much more than that. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Selected comparisons:

Czech PO, Bychkov (10/16) (DECC) 483 0656DH

MusicAeterna, Currentzis (1/18) (SONY) 88985 40435-2

Vivaldi

'Vivaldi x2 – Double Concertos'

Concertos – RV535^a; RV536^a; RV538^b; RV539^b; RV545^c; RV546^d; RV547^d; 'Concerto per SASISPGMDGSMB', RV574^e

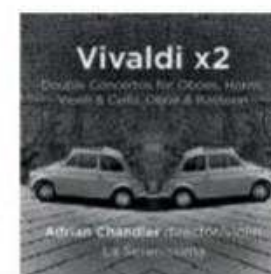
^{ace}Rachel Chaplin, ^{ae}Mark Baigent *obs*

^cPeter Whelan *bn* ^{be}Anneke Scott,

^{be}Jocelyn Lightfoot *hns* ^{de}Vladimir Waltham *vc*

La Serenissima / Adrian Chandler *de* *vn*

Avie © AV2392 (76' • DDD)



Anyone familiar with La Serenissima's zestily elegant *Four Seasons* (10/15) will be aware that these musicians represent one heck of a crack team when it comes

GRAMOPHONE *Focus*

CELEBRATING SILVESTER IN BERLIN

Peter Quantrill surveys the gala tradition of Berlin's annual concert-hall festivities




Gustavo Dudamel was a guest conductor at one of the Berlin Philharmonic's televised New Year's Eve concerts

'New Year's Eve Concerts'

Twenty concerts from between 1977 and 2015

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Herbert von Karajan, Claudio Abbado, Daniel Barenboim, Sir Simon Rattle, Gustavo Dudamel

EuroArts © (20 discs)  8024 25696-8



The New Year's Eve concerts in Berlin have become televised

events in the life of the city and beyond since the 1960s without ever rivalling the cohesive identity or global reach of longer-established seasonal celebrations in Vienna and Cambridge. Almost all these films have had a previous life on VHS or DVD; there prove to be stronger marketing than artistic attractions for boxing up 20 of them together.

We begin in 1977 with a powerfully built Beethoven Ninth which picks up tension from a slow start, elevated from ritual impersonality in the finale by a dream team of vocal soloists (Tomowa-Sintow, Baltsa, Kollo and Van Dam). The late Karajan era is recalled at somewhere near its best in 1983 with an astonishing

William Tell Overture which builds to a storm of terrifying psychological crisis that the conductor attempted but never quite emulated in Beethoven's *Pastoral*. The martial sensuality of its conclusion brings to mind once more the late Jeffrey Tate's observation of the conductor as 'geil' – horny, up for it – on the podium. In a Straussian finale, so does the red-blooded swagger of the *Delirium Waltz* and the magnetic sweep of a *Zigeunerbaron* Overture, more philosopher king than gypsy baron. It's a shame that room was not found for the 1978 concert of Liszt and Hungarian Berlioz sharing many of the same virtues as well as showing the conductor physically far more mobile and relaxed. Instead we have the notorious 1988 envoi featuring a desperately uncomfortable-looking teenage Evgeny Kissin bullied into crawling his way through Tchaikovsky's First Concerto.

For all his skill at programming such events, Abbado was not a natural master of ceremonies, and a less self-effacing podium presence would have lent more sparkle to gala evenings themed around Brahms, Spain, Mozart and Verdi. The 22-year-old Vengerov raises spirits with

a scorching *Tzigane*; so do Pletnev in the *Paganini* Rhapsody of Rachmaninov and Mirella Freni in Tatyana's Letter Scene. Performances otherwise fall prey to 'gala' concert syndrome, alternating between flat and frenetic, except in a unique compilation of great symphonic endings from 1999. Reviewing the individual reissue (9/14), I observed how Abbado leaves the orchestra to get on with a collection of Berlin waltzes; a far cry from the unabashed showmanship of Daniel Barenboim, who in 2001 seemed determined to show the BPO what they had missed out on by electing Rattle as their new chief after Abbado's subdued departure. Watching the players tango through *Tico Tico* and other old chestnuts from Buenos Aires is to see an orchestra reinvent itself in little more than a decade.

Another South American one-off guest was Gustavo Dudamel, leading another operatic gala with more ebullience than sensitivity to the scale of Elina Garanča's mezzo. Otherwise it's Rattle in charge all the way, and you can see how he got the Philharmonie rocking with Bernstein's *Wonderful Town* on his Silvester-debut in 2002, already attracting a younger and more diverse audience. He doesn't shirk

showman and bandmaster duties at such events. Slavonic and Hungarian dances, American songs, Russian potboilers and *Carmina Burana* are all done with affection and a close ear for theatrical effect. Accompanying star soloists in music off his beaten track yields always absorbing results: with Kissin, crisp and even playful in the Grieg Concerto; taking the lead in Mozart concertos with Uchida and the 90-year-old Pressler; yielding gracefully to Anne-Sophie Mutter's highly individual rubato in *Tzigane*. At another Mozart gala in 2005 – new to DVD – the wind principals (Pahud, flute, Mayer, oboe, and Wollenweber, bassoon) seem to lead a *Prague* Symphony at least as much as the man on the podium – or rather in front of the harpsichord, from which he proceeds, Karajan-style, to lead the finale of *Figaro* complete with a show-stealing Cherubino from Magdalena Kožená.

The nature of the set is too circumscribed, and chronologically too spotty, to add up to a performance history of any comprehensive value. Perhaps more valuable is its documentation of changing values in making music on film. Karajan set the pace for maestro-centred cinematography and for music on film as an art form in its own right. Technology is more the master than the servant of the score now, some will feel, with swooping cameras that went out of fashion in sports coverage some years ago. Cutting to cater for abbreviated attention spans in the age of the YouTube viewer, the slow close-up is now almost as *démodé* as the BPO's glamorous *espressivo*.

The presentation reflects some muddled thinking behind the purpose of a release which does not have an obvious consumer in mind. Twenty discs rattle around in a square box designed for twice that number, padded out by cardboard. Plain, unnumbered wallets give no information as to their content beyond performers, requiring the impatient viewer to flick through the booklet. This presents a summary of contents; no sign of the essays printed in the original issues of each film, still yet of an introduction to the compilation itself beyond a couple of text-commercials. There are some indifferently reproduced, black-and-white stills. For the price of the box (almost £100) you could subscribe to the orchestra's Digital Concert Hall for most of a year and sample or watch almost all these films and hundreds of others in high-definition sound and vision. **G**

to the music of Vivaldi. Indeed, last year they carried off a *Gramophone* Awards for their multi-composer assortment of sinfonias and concertos, 'The Italian Job' (5/17).

'Vivaldi x2' presents a medley of double concertos for hunting horns, oboes, bassoon, violin and cello, and it's a feast of pleasures right from its RV539 kick-off: the most glittering of Vivaldi's two double horn concertos, featuring some of the highest-tessitura horn-writing in the entire Baroque and headed up here by soloists Anneke Scott and Jocelyn Lightfoot with some fantastically nimble, neat, exuberant period horn-playing.

That high tessitura also allows RV539 the relative novelty of a slow movement for which the horns can stick around. However, you'll forget to miss the horns here in the other concerto, RV538, because what we get instead is another soloist to whom I could listen all day, cellist Vladimir Waltham; hear his gently grainy, luminous tone and his sighing trills, and fall in love. Plus, that tone acts as a perfect foil for the silkier sound coming from director Adrian Chandler's violin in the violin-and-cello concertos RV546 and RV547.

Balance is always satisfying, too. Soloists-wise, we have horns distinct from but evenly weighted with the orchestra, bassoons further forwards than the bright-toned oboes, and the strings properly forwards so as to really appreciate their timbres. Continuo is also nicely judged; returning to RV538's slow movement, I love the way they move from unobtrusive support one moment (and the harpsichord always remains delicately in the back of the sound) to the bass stepping up to meld and tonally blend with Waltham's hung suspensions, and the theorbo using opportune moments to poke invitingly through. Bravissima, La Serenissima. Again.

Charlotte Gardner

'The Golden Age'

Bruch Violin Concerto No 1, Op 26^a

Debussy Clair de lune (arr Koncz)^b

Gershwin Summertime (arr Heifetz)^c

Koncz/Satie A New Satiesfaction (featuring Gymnopédie No 1)^b **Kreisler** Schön Rosmarin^c

Syncopation^c **Ponce** Estrellita (arr Heifetz)^c

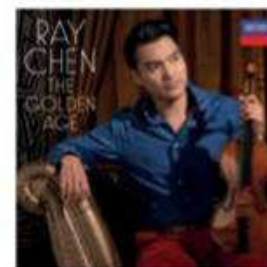
Scott Lotus Land (arr Kreisler)^c

Traditional Waltzing Matilda (arr Koncz)^b

Ray Chen ^{vn} **Julien Quentin** ^{pf} **Made in Berlin**

(Noah Bendix-Balgley ^{vn} Amihai Grosz ^{va} Stephan Koncz ^{vc})

^aLondon Philharmonic Orchestra / Robert Trevino
Decca [Ⓢ] 483 3852DH (53 • DDD)



I'll wager that champagne corks were popping in the Decca Classics office when

they first heard the finished master of 'The Golden Age', Ray Chen's first disc with them, having jumped from Sony last year; and for my part, Chen has done the impossible and made me love 'Waltzing Matilda'. Not a sentence I ever thought I'd write, but when it appears as a Gaelic-flavoured romance-turned-reel for string quartet ...

That little Aussie triumph sits as the final, zinging coda – and shout for Chen's Australian upbringing – on a programme celebrating the era during which violinists such as Fritz Kreisler and Jascha Heifetz walked the earth, and the music of Debussy, Satie, Bruch, Scott and Gershwin was new.

It's an internet generation-friendly bouquet. For outer blooms, Chen's own slick quartet, Made in Berlin, perform three pieces penned by their cellist Stephen Koncz, inside of which are snuggled Kreisler and Heifetz violin-and-piano duos with pianist Julien Quentin. Bruch's Violin Concerto then sits as the major central bloom – a warhorse bloom to be sure (and to mix metaphors), but, under Trevino and Chen's control, an exhilarating one, full of drive. Chen himself plays with all his usual combination of suavity and kick, and his central *Adagio* is a particular joy: long, at 9'26", which allows us to appreciate both his ability to spin out huge musical lines of thought and the strong-boned, penetrating, caramel-toned passion of his sound.

Space precludes a thorough tour of the chamber works. However, I must trumpet Koncz's quartet contributions because these are what really lift this already marvellous disc into genuinely fresh, new territories. Complementing the aforementioned 'Waltzing Matilda' is a sensuously perfumed arrangement of *Clair de lune* that plays straight with Debussy, while the disc-opening *A New Satiesfaction* is a delicately humming, serenely exhilarating spin on Satie's *Gymnopédie* No 1 that's guaranteed to appeal to Max Richter fans.

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Charlotte Gardner

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Shostakovich's Symphony No 5

Krzysztof Urbański tells Andrew Mellor about his potentially 'insane' approach to the work

Just as I'm reaching over the table to switch off the voice recorder, Krzysztof Urbański adds a short, unexpected coda to our hour-long discussion of Shostakovich's most enduring symphony. 'You know, I really am wondering what you're going to think when you hear the CD,' he says, with a half-smile. 'You might think it's insane. This is the whole reason I do music, actually. I hate tradition. And I'm not just talking about musical tradition. Generally, I think the idea of tradition is something wrong for the whole of humanity.'

Urbański's rubbishing of tradition needn't necessarily scare the horses. His reading of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony is, he assures me, closer to the letter of the score 'than any other recording I have heard'. Tradition is wrong; Shostakovich was right. And this from a conductor who I'm told – courtesy of musicians in his erstwhile ensemble the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra – has every page of every score in his repertoire imprinted upon his brain with photographic accuracy. Did he even *use* his score for this live recording of the Shostakovich with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, released on Alpha Classics this month? 'No. Nor in the rehearsals, actually,' he says. 'That's irrelevant though.'

'The music has got faster and faster just to arrive in the same place. Shostakovich is saying: it doesn't matter how fast you run, they will get you in the end'

We start with the big issues. For Urbański, the symphony is 'Shostakovich's personal struggle with the world around him': a picture of terror and oppression from a man pushed to the point of nervous collapse by Stalin's regime. He views the Fifth's finale as a monumental chase in which freedom is glimpsed (the trumpet theme at fig 108) but proves to be an illusion. He refers to the 'brainwashing' qualities of the obsessively repeated note A (derived from earlier quavers in the timpani), and describes the motif it covers – spelt out ominously but gently by clarinet and bassoons from three bars after fig 121 – as the symphony's 'motif of terror'.

The quavers that carry that repeated A for the last seven pages of the score should clearly be played at quaver=188 (as opposed to the erroneous crotchet=188), Urbański says, 'to make sure that each hit of the stick over the Russian people is equally painful'. The conductor even had his Elbphilharmonie strings play them with free bows, Stokowski-style, to bring equal emphasis to every single note.

None of which would count for anything without the beautifully simple mathematics with which Urbański plots the final movement's ratcheting tempos. 'Every recording I know disrespects the tempo marking, beginning with Mravinsky, who started so fast that he couldn't get any faster,' Urbański says. 'You have to trust that the beginning is only *Allegro non*



Krzysztof Urbański: casting off the shackles of tradition

troppo and then accelerate *poco a poco* to crotchet=104 at fig 98. If you get this right, it's the key to the whole movement because you can then move it up from there and hit the *real Allegro* at fig 104, marked crotchet=132. Actually, the fastest the symphony gets is at fig 111, minim=92: the speed has pretty much doubled, yet the pulse is almost the same as the opening crotchet=88. So the music has got faster and faster just to arrive in the same place. Shostakovich is saying: it doesn't matter how fast you run, they will get you in the end.'

Also unusually, Urbański maintains the tempo at seven bars after fig 111. 'That is obligatory. All I do is take a little *rallentando* at fig 112 so I can flow into this minim=80. People almost always disregard that, because it's very, very slow. But this is where the brainwashing starts.'

Urbański was raised in Warsaw. He was seven when the Berlin Wall fell, but the sights and sounds of the Soviet regime have a direct bearing on his reading of the symphony, particularly its middle movements. The slow *Largo* (third movement) represents, in his mind, Shostakovich at prayer. 'For many people in Soviet times, the church was the only place where they could forget about terror and focus on their own lives,' he says. 'So, I believe that the strings are a choir;

you have the Russian Orthodox *basso profundo* in the double basses and then at fig 78 you have a boy soprano (the solo violin) – very pure.’ The same melody will emerge at fig 89, raging, topped by a manic xylophone. ‘People understood that this was a scream of anger,’ says Urbański, explaining that the movement was immediately encored during the work’s first performance in 1937. ‘It’s impossible to create a more angry passage than this, and yet it comes from that very motif introduced as if by a pure boy soprano.’

While Urbański believes the last two movements speak of ‘personal feelings’, he describes the first two as ‘descriptions of the world around him ... like Shostakovich is sitting on his windowsill looking out – with a cigarette, of course’.

‘There was suddenly no more aristocracy in Russia to go with this elegant dance, but there was a lot of vodka’

Again, he draws on personal experience for the second-movement *Allegretto*. ‘I remember seeing so many drunks on the street in Warsaw, and I see this movement as a picture of the waltz reduced to street vulgarity. There was suddenly no more aristocracy in Russia to go with this elegant dance, but there was a lot of vodka.’ Still, his analysis of the notes is specific. ‘I wanted that ugliness, that vulgarity, in the articulation of the very opening. Later on, Shostakovich writes staccato – but not here at the opening, on cellos and basses, so you should really draw it out. And the metronome is perfect: crotchet=138. It’s not *presto*, as you hear on many recordings. It should be rather slow but it’s also very clear that it’s a dance.’ He compares the grotesquerie of the movement to Mikhail Bulgakov’s novel *The Master and Margarita*. ‘Bulgakov uses the Devil to represent some sort of subhuman power that manifests itself in the grotesque; Shostakovich is doing the same.’

Our backwards discussion of the symphony arrives at its first movement. Urbański is open to the idea of Shostakovich proclaiming a hidden love in its second subject (it could be derived from the ‘l’amour’ refrain in Bizet’s aria ‘L’amour est un oiseau rebelle’ from *Carmen*; a lover of the composer’s had reportedly upped sticks to live in Spain with a man named Roman Carmen). ‘Maybe he was thinking about love. Maybe the initial, brass theme of the *last* movement is from the Toreador Song. We will never know.’

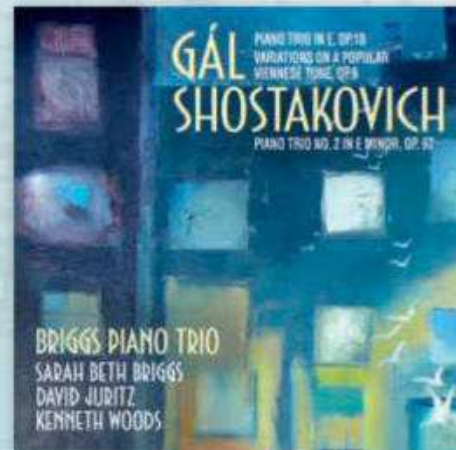
Either way, neither love nor longing are the first movement’s prevailing moods. ‘It’s a strict allegro-sonata form, complicated by the fact that the theme is made up of multiple parts,’ says Urbański. ‘All of them are introduced by strings, and all of them optimistically go up, only to fall down again. This shows that Shostakovich was detached from what he was describing.’

Here, Urbański admits to taking the music faster than written. ‘He wrote quaver=76, which is unbearable. Everyone takes this a little faster because you’re afraid that you’ll lose attention. But Shostakovich *did* want this to be dull.’ Even the woodwind need a certain chill, I suggest. ‘Exactly, and I specifically ask the oboist not to warm up this long A (in the bar before fig 6). Every oboist wants to make that sing. Please don’t. It’s one colour. Or rather, I see it in black and white.’ When Urbański *does* see colour in the piece, it is surely blood red. **G**

A review of Urbański’s recording of Shostakovich’s Symphony No 5 will appear in the next edition – the Awards issue – of Gramophone



New Releases

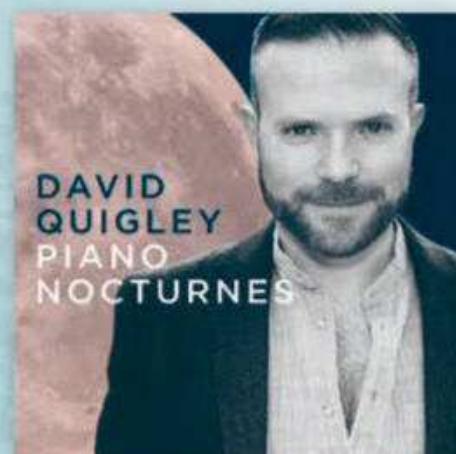


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Chamber



Harriet Smith listens to the Busch Trio and friends in Dvořák:

'The sheer quality and naturalness of their music-making is deliciously demonstrated in the First Quintet' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 72**



Richard Bratby is impressed by the young trombonist Peter Moore:

'The way Baillieu teases the piano part in the Rachmaninov helps give shape to Moore's carefully phrased lines' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**

Beethoven

'Sonatas for Fortepiano and Violin, Vol 4'

Three Violin Sonatas, Op 12

Susanna Ogata *vn* Ian Watson *fp*

Coro Connections © COR16161 (57' • DDD)

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Beethoven Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 12 No 1; No 2, Op 12 No 2; No 3, Op 12 No 3; No 4, Op 23; No 5, 'Spring', Op 24; No 8, Op 30 No 3

Ash A Major Chase

Bingham The Neglected Child

Brooke Swoop

Dove Ludwig Games

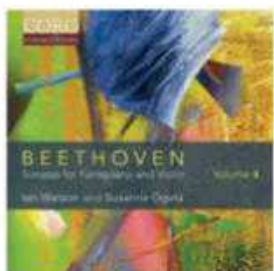
Thurlow Mehlschöberl

H Watkins Spring

Krycia Osostowicz *vn* Daniel Tong *pf*

Somm Céleste © ② SOMMCD0181-2 (149' • DDD)

Recorded live at Cedars Hall, Wells, Somerset, February 23, May 29, September 30 & December 17, 2017



Duncan Druce was troubled by 'the lack of any really soft playing' in the first volume of Susanna Ogata and Ian Watson's survey of Beethoven's violin sonatas (9/15). I have a similar reaction to this final instalment. There's the occasional passage where the duo's brawny approach is effective, as in the development section of the Third Sonata's opening movement, with its churning figuration and walloping accents (listen from 4'35"). But so much of Op 12's sly humour and spry lyricism is conveyed confidentially, or through dramatic dynamic gradations and contrasts. The rollicking finale of that E flat major Sonata, for instance, is supposed to start at a grinning *piano* but Ogata and Watson pay no heed and guffaw from the get-go in a hearty *forte*. They stomp blithely through the first movement of the Second Sonata, too, putting stress on the each of main beats

of the duple metre, thus spoiling the music's intricate and ingeniously witty rhythmic irregularities. Their not-so-vivacious *Allegro vivace* doesn't help matters; but turn to the new Somm recording, where Krycia Osostowicz and Daniel Tong are beguilingly coquettish at a nearly identical tempo.

Indeed, Osostowicz and Tong's interpretative style – patient, affectionate, warmly conversational, sensitive to harmonic detail – reminds me of Schneiderhan and Kempff's classic mid-'50s set (DG, 12/00). They may sound distinctly old-fashioned compared with the dashing brilliance of Faust and Melnikov (Harmonia Mundi, 10/10), say, but these are thoroughly engaging performances. The whole of Op 12 abounds with freshness and fun. In the volatile A minor Sonata, Op 23, Osostowicz and Tong hold urgency and charm in careful balance. Only the duo's fussy, comparatively awkward account of the *Spring* Sonata disappoints, but happily they're back on form in a mercurial and often exhilarating reading of Op 30 No 3.

Somm is releasing Osostowicz and Tong's cycle in two generously filled two-disc volumes, and each of the six sonatas here is accompanied by a newly composed 'companion' piece, hence the title 'Beethoven Plus'. It's not a novel concept, admittedly – Mariss Jansons did something similar in his 2012 symphony cycle with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra – but is illuminating nonetheless. Most of the contemporary works serve as preludes. Jonathan Dove's *Ludwig Games*, for instance, is a minimalist toccata whose final cadence segues seamlessly into Op 12 No 1. Some works seem to inhabit worlds far removed from Beethoven's yet ultimately prove to be suitable foils, like the obsessive birdsong of Elspeth Brooke's *Swoop* prefacing Op 12 No 3. Judith Bingham's deeply melancholic *The Neglected Child* is the only postlude (for Op 23), and thus sits next to Huw Watkins's elegiac *Spring* (for Op 24,

obviously); as it happens, the two are perhaps more complementary to each other than to their Beethovenian inspirations.

The recordings were made live in the new Cedars Hall at Wells Cathedral School; and, while I'm normally not a fan of retaining applause on a recording, it feels right here. I even found myself tickled to share the audience's audible delight at the magical way Osostowicz and Tong play the end of Op 12 No 2. I think I may have sighed with pleasure myself. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Beethoven

'The Complete String Quartets, Vol 1'

String Quartets – No 1, Op 18 No 1;

No 3, Op 18 No 3; No 4, Op 18 No 4;

No 7, Op 59 No 2; No 12, Op 127;

No 16, Op 135. Piano Sonata No 9, Op 14 No 1

Casals Quartet

Harmonia Mundi © ③ HMM90 2400/2

(3h 1' • DDD)



The Barcelona-based Cuarteto Casals have already made a very distinctive mark in quartets by Haydn, Mozart and Schubert. Now, having circled the base of Mount Beethoven, they begin the ascent, with the first release in a full cycle to be completed in 2020. This first volume deals in beginnings and endings: starting with the Quartet in F, Op 18 No 1, containing the Mozartian Op 18 No 3 (supposedly the first that Beethoven composed) and finishing with his last completed quartet, the extraordinary Op 135 – also in F.

The immediately striking thing about these performances is the sound. Cuarteto Casals play on modern instruments but they've assimilated the lessons of historically informed performance – swift tempos, dancelike articulation, the use of vibrato as a sparingly deployed expressive colour –



Fleet-footed conviction: the Casals Quartet launch their cycle of the complete Beethoven string quartets

and incorporated them into performances of fleet-footed conviction. The group own a collection of Classical-era bows; while they don't say if they're using them here (the booklet contains no biographical information), it certainly sounds as if they might be.

The ensemble tone is silvery and transparent, with ringing, resonant *tuttis* (the recorded balance is lively and slightly favours the top and bottom registers) and textures of real clarity in contrapuntal passages. There isn't a massive sonority in the whole set; in fact, if I had to choose one word to describe these interpretations, it would be 'classical'. There's certainly a sense that the Op 18 quartets are contemporary with late Haydn, and there are moments – the throwaway opening of Op 18 No 1, for example, or the way the march rhythm rises playfully to the fore in the *Adagio* of Op 127 – when Beethoven's inspiration can seem disarmingly light.

What becomes clear, however, is that in each quartet the Cuarteto Casals have identified a climactic point and focused the entire interpretation around it. So in Op 18 No 4, the Minuet acquires an almost symphonic weight. The sweeping

cello solo that opens Op 59 No 1 is not an end in itself but the understated beginning of a process that finds torrential release (after a slow movement of steadily mounting emotional intensity) in the finale. Similarly, the glorious *Lento assai* of Op 135 serves as a prelude to the 'Muss es sein?' finale, which they play with fierce brilliance. But there's no loss of poignancy or tenderness in that great slow movement; rather, a heightened sense of anticipation.

Throughout, the group are playfully subversive with rhythms: giving the opening gesture of Op 127 a destabilising kick and making Beethoven's own transcription of the Piano Sonata Op 14 No 1 (a rarity even for a 'complete' Beethoven quartet cycle) move with quicksilver fluidity. Nothing in this set is quite what it first seems, then, and the same restless, forwards-moving energy pulses through even the gentlest bar. The Cuarteto Casals's sound world won't be to all tastes and I can think of interpretations that go deeper and darker. But these are performances to provoke, to amuse and to refresh jaded palates. It'll be fascinating to hear the next instalment.

Richard Bratby

Beethoven · Glinka · R Strauss

'The Princess & the Bear'

Beethoven Trio, Op 38^a **Glinka** Trio pathétique^a

R Strauss Duet-Concertino^b

Sarah Watts *cl* **Laurence Perkins** *bn*

^a**Martin Roscoe** *pf* ^b**Royal Scottish**

National Orchestra / **Sian Edwards**

Hyperion © CDA68263 (76' • DDD)



Dating from 1948, Strauss's *Duet-Concertino* for clarinet, bassoon, strings and

harp was his final instrumental work, though unlike many of his late scores it has programmatic associations. Strauss once told Clemens Krauss that it was inspired by Hans Andersen's *The Swineherd*, about an impoverished prince who woos his princess while tending her father's pigs. In a letter to Hugo Burghauser, a former Vienna Philharmonic bassoonist and the work's dedicatee, however, Strauss came up with a fairy-tale scenario of his own, in which a princess (the clarinet) encounters a bear (the bassoon), who becomes a handsome prince when she agrees to dance with him.

Laurence Perkins, in a booklet note for his new recording with Sarah Watts and the RSNO, argues that we should ultimately think of it as Strauss's final tone poem. This is debatable, though the scenario certainly informs the clarinet's nervous flourishes after the bassoon's first entry and the transformation of the first movement's halting second subject into an expansive love theme in the *Andante*. The skittish final rondo, meanwhile, overlong in the opinion of many, gradually mutates into a Viennese waltz, not entirely inappropriate for a princess and her dancing-bear prince.

The performance, meanwhile, is strong, if occasionally hampered by a close recording, which catches some key-clatter and the occasional intake of breath from the soloists. Sian Edwards adopts relaxed speeds, which gives the music space to breathe, and the RSNO sound consistently good throughout. Watts does ravishing things with the great clarinet melody with which the work opens, to which Perkins responds with a gruffness that gradually broadens into deeply felt lyricism. There's plenty of wit and bravura from them both in the finale, where Edwards's refusal to rush also allows us to appreciate the complexity of Strauss's musical argument, which can blur when the movement is scrambled.

Martin Roscoe, meanwhile, joins Watts and Perkins for the chamber works that form its companion pieces. Beethoven's Op 38 Trio is an arrangement, originally for clarinet, cello and piano, of his Op 20 Septet, though the cello line largely derives from Op 20's bassoon part, which allows Perkins to appropriate it in a performance that combines elegance with energy and some deliciously pointed detail. Glinka's *Trio pathétique* dates from his years in Italy, meanwhile, and finds Watts and Perkins squaring off and duetting like protagonists from one of the *bel canto* operas that inspired it, while Roscoe accompanies them with understated subtlety. It's an engaging disc, and very enjoyable. **Tim Ashley**

Cerha

Acht Sätze nach Hölderlin-Fragmenten.

Oboe Quintet. Neun Bagatellen

Swiss Chamber Concerts

Claves Ⓢ 50-1816 (55' • DDD)



Friedrich Cerha celebrated his 92nd birthday earlier this year and two of these works are from his eighties. The largest piece, however, was completed

at the comparative youthful age of 69: *Eight Movements based on Hölderlin Fragments* for string sextet (1995). These are not so much unsung settings of selected verses (printed in the booklet) as instrumental fantasias derived from both the texts' emotional impact and what Cerha calls 'the melody of the text'. Rooted stylistically in the music of Berg and early Webern, Cerha's own personal idiom binds them together as a cohesive entity.

The Oboe Quintet (2007) was a deliberate attempt to write a modern work eschewing 'the "new" instrumental techniques ... sounds that are "foreign" to the instrument'. The music itself is in no sense regressive and in places – especially the slow central span – quite exploratory. It is as if Cerha did not want to mask his expressive purpose with instrumental distraction. How much of a vicarious task that may have been for the oboist Heinz Holliger is anyone's guess!

After a sextet and quintet, the most recent (and last-placed) work is a string trio in the form of nine quirky Bagatelles (2008), 'miniatures with very precise contours', as the composer writes in the booklet. Each has a very specific character, from the opening 'Zornig' (angry), through melancholy – visited twice! – and capriciousness, to the concluding 'Trotzig, Eigensinnig' (defiant, stubborn). While not a set of variations per se, there are thematic connections between the movements. The 10 members of the peripatetic Swiss Chamber Players (only the viola player Jürg Dähler and the cellist Daniel Haefliger play in all three works) perform splendidly throughout, with pinpoint accuracy of ensemble and intonation. Terrific sound, too, from Claves. Recommended.

Guy Rickards

Dvořák

Piano Quintets – No 1, Op 5 B28; No 2, Op 81 B155.

Bagatelles, Op 47 B79

Busch Trio with Maria Milstein *vn*

Miguel da Silva *va*

Alpha Ⓢ ALPHA403 (81' • DDD)



A few months back I was enjoying the Busch Trio's Dvořák piano quartets in the company of viola player Miguel da Silva. Now they're back again for the quintets, adding the Van Baerle Trio's violinist Maria Milstein to the mix. The sheer quality and naturalness of their music-making is deliciously demonstrated in the development section of the opening

movement of the First Quintet of 1872 (which was nearly lost to posterity when Dvořák impetuously burned the manuscript; luckily a copy had been made). If this is not exactly a finished masterpiece, there are many enticing things in it, not least the switch between sustained writing and sudden joyful outbursts in the slow movement, while the players go at the finale with gusto and make the most of the whispered asides.

By way of a bonus, we also get the Bagatelles, Op 47, originally written for harmonium. They are smiling, good-natured pieces for domestic use and they sound very effective in this arrangement. The first piece is quietly catchy, while the last is a rollickingly good natured *Poco allegro*.

But the main act here is the Second Quintet, indubitable masterpiece that it is. The opening cello theme tells us much about a group's approach. The Busch's Ori Epstein shapes it with care, allowing it to unfold unhurriedly, to which the other players respond with warmth though with less extremes of dynamics than some. The Pavel Haas Quartet and Giltburg hold things back still more in the opening but then inject the music with a pulsing energy that is very dramatic, while the Elias (with Biss) colour the lines with plentiful portamentos. Compared to them, the Busch et al are just a little more careful-sounding, though ultimately this is a matter of personal taste.

The glorious Dumka that forms the second movement has plenty of intensity in this new recording, the viola launching matters with due solemnity, and as it continues, there's a nice sense of interplay and responsiveness between the musicians. They're a touch slower-moving and slightly less withdrawn than the Elias/Biss at the outset. To my mind, no one quite captures the character of this movement as vividly as the PHQ with Giltburg. The latter group lead off on the merriest of dances in the following Furiant but the Busch find comparable glee here, with a lithe playfulness that gives a brilliant shine to the proceedings. The finale goes with a will – yet the Busch also relish the more fined-down moments and judge the holding-back before the final bars to a nicety.

This is one of the best things I've yet heard from the Busch in their evolving Dvořák series, naturally recorded, with first-rate notes from Jan Smaczny.

Harriet Smith

Piano Quintet No 2 – selected comparisons:

Biss, *Elias Qt* (12/12) (ONYX) ONYX4092

Giltburg, Pavel Haas *Qt* (11/17) (SUPR) SU4195-2

Firsova

'Fantasy'

Tennyson Fantasy, Op 36^a. Bride of the Wind, Op 34^b. Expressions, Op 9^c. Loss, Op 10^d. Here in Canisy, Op 22^e. Unity, Op 26^f. Fantasy, Op 29^g

^eEllie Laugharne *sop* ^fNicholas Crawley *bar*
^{cd}Mark van de Wiel *cl* ^gTim Hugh *vc* ^{bcefg}Alissa Firsova, ^bSimon Mulligan *pf* ^{ad}Tippett Quartet
Vivat © VIVAT115 (69' • DDD • T)



Alissa Firsova may be the mature side of 30 but this album radiates youth in all

its wonder, complexity and heartening naivety. Any caveats implied by that observation are largely blown away by the ferocity of Firsova's expression and there are countless moments on this disc where you feel her writing in the white heat of total inspiration.

Many of them come in *Bride of the Wind* for two pianists, a reflection on the love between Oskar Kokoschka and Alma Mahler that obviously yet transcendently captures the idea of two souls so wrapped up in one another that their relationship is as fraught, precarious and charged as is its ecstatic. There are many levels on which Firsova harnesses that feeling: one pianist

knowingly completing another's thoughts; one instrument rubbing against the other like a huge, grinding hulk in an act that could almost prove fatal.

Much of the music here is explicitly linked to beautiful experiences in Firsova's life. In *Loss* for clarinet quintet, we hear the gargantuan frustration of bliss: the idea that paradise knowingly excludes realities both mundane and horrific. Clarinettist Marc van der Wiel's playing is hypnotic. In *Tennyson Fantasy* for string quartet, Firsova uses contradictory elements to temper the music's gush, though there are moments here when romantic idealism gets the better of her.

Not, however, in the extraordinary passacaglia, which twists itself on to a single F natural and again speaks of the fragility of beautiful things and feelings. Masterly constructed, too, is *Eternity* for clarinet and piano, an expression of the eternal that Firsova was determined should last no more than two minutes. Ellie Laugharne's striking delivery in 'Here in Canisy' is a little grand for the sense Firsova conveys – surely awestruck rather than striking awe – and it's hard to discern the words. The Brittenesque augmented fifths and miniature blossoming episodes of this song and 'Unity' (for baritone) are highly evocative yet it's remarkable that, despite

using established forms and often rooting her music tonally or modally, no figure looms over Firsova's shoulder to tell you any of this is received, learnt or overly influenced. A striking composer from whom I look forward to hearing more – especially, I hope it's not too cynical to say, when life has given her more than the residual tragedy of paradise to reflect upon.

Andrew Mellor

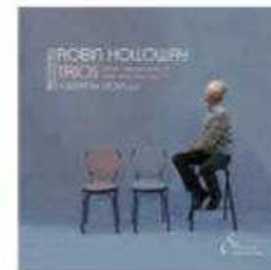
Holloway

Trios – for Clarinet, Viola and Piano, Op 79; for Oboe, Viola and Piano, Op 115.

Viola Sonata, Op 87

Rest Ensemble

Sheva Contemporary © SH208 (54' • DDD)



Robin Holloway once stated that as a young composer he wanted to be 'a Modern

among the Moderns'. Now in his seventies, the modernist has become 'a Romanticist among neo-Romantics'.

Spanning a period of 50 years, the final leg of this long and chequered journey of musical self-discovery can be traced in the three works included on this disc. The Trio for clarinet, viola and piano, Op 79, which

Live at
The Concertgebouw

Schubert
Symphony 5

ORR/Gardiner

Brahms
Serenade 2

SDG729

Sir John Eliot Gardiner
Orchestre Révolutionnaire et
Romantique

Schubert: Symphony No. 5 in B-flat
Major, D.485

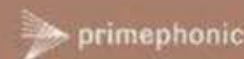
Brahms: Serenade No. 2 in A Major,
Op. 16

Sir John Elliot Gardiner leads the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique in performances recorded live in concert at The Concertgebouw, Amsterdam.

In Serenade No.2 a 20-year-old Brahms chooses to omit violins, creating an unusually dark sound, while the lively style of Schubert's Syphony No.5 seems to reflect the composer's youthful exuberance.



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The award-winning **Carion Wind Quintet** returns with *Dreams of Freedom*, featuring the world-premiere recording of *Borderless* by Syrian refugee Moutaz Arian, alongside Mozart, Zemlinsky, Hindemith, Stravinsky and Pärt



The rich variety of music on this album is unified by each composer's 'dream of freedom'. All of these composers experienced exile of one kind or another, travelling far from home in order to pursue their vocation. Mozart left the stifling confines of Salzburg for the cultural riches of Vienna. Stravinsky, Hindemith, Zemlinsky and Pärt all left unsympathetic or even hostile regimes, and Kurdish composer Moutaz Arian escaped Syria and now lives in China; he dedicated his piece, *Borderless*, to Carion. Yet despite the profound, sometimes painful origins of this music, this is an album full of joie de vivre: music full of hope, intellect and even humour. A fascinating and unmissable release.

Described by the New York Times Digest as "a star whose light transcends the stage", Spanish violist **Jesus Rodolfo** takes us on a journey through music for solo viola in his Odradek debut, *Transfixing Metamorphosis*



Jesus Rodolfo offers a sublime interpretation of a transcription of J.S. Bach's *Sonata No. 3*, BWV 1005 (originally for solo violin), a work of great power which includes the longest fugue ever written by Bach, a breathtaking tour de force. In Hindemith's *Viola Sonata*, Op. 11, No. 5, Rodolfo finds parallels with J. S. Bach via the work's neoclassical musical language, leavened by a purity, even a romanticism, of spirit. Ligeti's *Viola Sonata* is considered perhaps the most challenging solo viola work yet written, a challenge audibly relished by Jesus Rodolfo in this thrilling performance.

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dates from the mid-1990s, is set out in the form of an animated three-way conversation. Each instrument sets out its position but soon enough the dialogue erupts into a full-blown argument, and all-out conflict is only assuaged by a lyrical solo passage on piano.

Another, more cerebral conversation is also going on here, this time between Holloway and echoes of musical pasts. Modernist elements now appear as nothing more than disembodied traces, distilled in the form of hollowed-out 19th-century operatic gestures or *fin de siècle* Viennese-style dances.

While the Op 79 Trio is in a single, continuous movement sliced into short episodic slivers, the later Trio for oboe, violin and piano, Op 115, makes greater use of expansive lines and gestures. Dialogue between the three instruments is more direct and integrated – the music formed from paragraphs rather than pithy postulations.

Both the Op 115 Trio and Sonata for solo viola, Op 87, adopt a formal structure where the final movement's bipartite design telescopically conflates the mood and tempo of the previous two movements. This works especially well in the sonata, where the preceding trios' animated chatter has given way to an internal musical dialogue at peace with itself. The performance by members of the Rest Ensemble is accurate and assured throughout, with viola player Henrietta Hill acquitting herself especially well in the sonata. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

MacMillan

String Quartets – No 1, 'Visions of a November Spring'; No 2, 'Why is this night different?'; No 3
Royal Quartet

Hyperion © CDA68196 (71' • DDD)



The cover of this disc of string quartets by James MacMillan is a simple illustration

of a dense, web-like tangle of lines in front of four empty chairs. It's an appropriate metaphor for the music contained inside, where complex polyphonic textures are often juxtaposed with pregnant pauses and sudden silences.

A solitary, sustained D in the viola, heard at the beginning of MacMillan's early two-movement String Quartet No 1, *Visions of a November Spring*, emerges from the shadow of silence. Inaudible at first, it is taken up in turn by the other string instruments in ever more aggressive and confrontational exchanges. Set out on a much larger scale,

the second movement's main building blocks are formed out of three distinct ideas. Presented one after the other in the opening section, they are knotted together in a densely constructed development section. As the music hurtles towards a final, unhinged dancelike flourish, MacMillan's stroke of genius here is to suddenly recall the end of the opening movement, and the realisation that what has been heard all along is a more elaborate exposition of it.

Composed in 1998, the Second Quartet, subtitled *Why is this night different?* reflects a shift towards a style that is more expressive and direct. A tense focus is maintained throughout, partly achieved through the quartet's extended single-movement design, but also inspired by the work's programmatic content, which takes the flight of the Children of Israel from Egypt as its starting point. Soaring melodic lines, shaped and coloured to give the impression of improvised music, act as a transcendent metaphor for the children's emancipation from slavery, although an uncertain conclusion, ending with a low E flat in the cello, suggests that the victory is a pyrrhic one.

In contrast, the dense tangle heard in the String Quartet No 3 results from the wilful, stubborn and fiercely independent characterisation of each string part, whose lines in the first movement appear to converge as if by accident rather than design. The second movement is textbook MacMillan, with sounds and silences, emptiness and excess foreshadowing the final moments of the quartet – a thread of diminishing lines disappearing into an empty void. Excellent throughout, the Royal Quartet impart a brittle edge to the sound that brings MacMillan's quartets closer to mid-century European modernists such as Lutosławski and Penderecki. But there are moments of intense, lyric beauty here too. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Mendelssohn · Reimann · Schumann

'Intermezzo'

Mendelssohn String Quartet No 1, Op 12

Reimann Adagio zum Gedenken an Robert Schumann **Schumann/Reimann** Six Songs, Op 107^a **Schumann** String Quartet No 1, Op 41 No 1

Schumann Quartet with ^a**Anna Lucia Richter** sop
Berlin Classics © 0301058BC (64' • DDD)



It has been quite a month for concept albums from string quartets. Having also

reviewed the Dudok's imaginative 'Solitude' (see page 77), here's one from the Schumann Quartet (three brothers plus Estonian viola player Liisa Randalu), whose previous disc, 'Landscapes', ranged from Haydn to Pärt. This new one, 'Intermezzo', features the first quartets of Mendelssohn and Schumann together with Schumann homages from Aribert Reimann.

In the first of the quartets by their namesake, they are alive to its changeability and embrace the skittering accents of the Scherzo without ever becoming merely motoric, the Trio offering a moment of calm. And how beautifully the viola, cushioned by pizzicato strings, takes up the narrative in the slow movement (from 1'38"). If the new group can't quite match the depths found by the classic Zehetmair Quartet account (ECM, 6/03), they come pretty close. In the leaping finale, too, the Schumann Quartet are hugely assured, with pinpoint accuracy of ensemble.

From here to Reimann's *Adagio zum Gedenken an Robert Schumann*, based on two chorales written by Schumann while he was in the asylum in Eendenich. But you don't need to be aware of the biographical details to be hooked by this deeply disturbing, nightmarish and yet at times transcendently beautiful piece, given here with immediacy and drama. For Reimann's reworkings of Schumann's Op 107 songs the quartet are joined by Anna Lucia Richter, who sings with flexibility and vivacity. Replacing piano with strings makes for a whole new range of colours – Reimann has the same affinity for Schumann as György Kurtág and Robin Holloway in this regard. The final song, 'Abendlied', is particularly heart-rending in this version, the quartet lending the voice a chorale-like cushion of sound. It had me pulling off the shelves the wondrous Christine Schäfer in Vol 1 of Graham Johnson's Schumann survey (Hyperion, 8/96) – still a benchmark, though that is not to compare like with like.

We move from this effortlessly into the chordal *Adagio* introduction to Mendelssohn's Op 12 Quartet. Sincerity underlies everything the Schumann Quartet do and they are particularly persuasive in the *Andante espressivo*, balancing freedom and restraint to perfection. And the *Molto allegro* never becomes merely a race to the finish line – they studied with the Alban Berg Quartet and it shows.

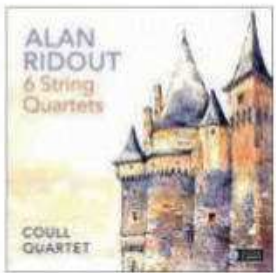
The booklet contains a thought-provoking essay but nothing as banal as texts or translations. Don't let that put you off a fine offering from this young group. **Harriet Smith**

Ridout

Six String Quartets

Coull Quartet

Omnibus Classics © CC5014 (76' • DDD)



He may be held in affection by those who knew him but the music of Alan

Ridout (1934-96) has not been recorded extensively, with mere smatterings from his sizeable choral and organ output tucked away on numerous anthologies. The disc of cello concertos (11/03) confirmed a composer of no mean resource, reinforced by the six string quartets which emerged across less than a decade (1985-94) as intimations of mortality gradually became more pronounced.

The First Quartet proceeds from a sombre *Adagio*, via an energetic Scherzo of audible folk inflection, to a finale whose four variations on an austere eloquent theme open out the emotional range before a resigned close. The Second Quartet pointedly reverses these formal and expressive trajectories – its assertive *Vivace* being complemented by a *Lento* of soulful restraint, then a *Presto* both forthright and determined. The Third Quartet offers another take on this format, its gently ironic Fugue contrasting with a robustly humorous Scherzo, then a Passacaglia whose 12 variations are more affecting for their methodical consistency of focus.

After a six-year pause, the Fourth and Fifth Quartets are each cast in a single movement. The former, beginning and ending in pensive introspection but whose capricious central section is intriguingly 'etherealised', is Ridout's masterpiece in this medium; the latter is a tensile study that maintains its toccata-like drive through to a disarming end. Reflecting the Breton environs of its composer's closing years, the five-movement Sixth Quartet evokes aspects of the town of Vitré in music whose unforced naivety is the more appealing for its absence of affectation.

Whether or not the Coull Quartet have these quartets in their repertoire, performances are fully attuned to this engaging music. Hopefully some of Ridout's orchestral pieces (not least the Second Symphony, dedicated to Tippett) will duly extend his recorded profile.

Richard Whitehouse

'An English Sett for Trumpet'

Bennet All creatures now are merry-minded

Byrd The Sixth Pavan and Galliard. Though I be Brown. La verginella Dowland Fantasie No 3

Gibbons Go from my window. In nomine a 5 No 2. O that the learned poets. The silver swanne Jenkins Fantasy No 1. Newark Siege Lawes Almaine a 3 in G. Fantasies a 6 – in G minor; in B flat. Pavan and Division in G Locke Suite No 2 Morley Now is the month of maying Tomkins Oyez! Has any found a lad Wilbye Adew, sweet Amarillis (all arr T Jones)

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood *tpt*

Daniel-Ben Pienaar *pf*

Linn © CKD588 (58' • DDD)



The premise of Jonathan Freeman-Attwood and Daniel-Ben Pienaar's latest

reimagining of the music of the past for modern trumpet and piano is to debunk the oft-asserted belief that English music went into a fallow period between the deaths of Byrd and Tallis and the emergence of Purcell. Enter a five-strong collection of 'setts' (early suites) which intuitively mix and match repertoire from the 1620-80 period, covering a spread of forms and genres from music for mixed consort through to madrigals. Three setts are multi-composer compilations; Jenkins, Byrd and Tomkins sit together on one, for instance. Locke and Lawes, meanwhile, get a sett each to themselves. Every single piece is clearly selected with love and intimate knowledge, and thus all of it reinforces Freeman-Attwood's point with aplomb.

Freeman-Attwood's tone itself is a joy: warmly glowing with a multitude of different colours, and deliciously sleek both in technical execution (listen to the cleanness of the ornamentation in Byrd's Sixth Pavan and Galliard) and overall sound. Also deserving of undiluted praise are Timothy Jones's arrangements; simply to know how and what to pull from the original, densely polyphonic interweavings in order to end up with a clear and mellifluous melodic line for the trumpet, coupled with commentary and dovetailed union from the piano. For instance, Gibbons's *The silver swanne* may be a relatively simple madrigal but still I think of the original and wonder whether I could have come up with the purity Jones has achieved.

Engineering-wise, Freeman-Attwood very much occupies the foreground; and although there are moments when I find myself wishing I could properly appreciate the extent of the polyphonic intricacies Pienaar is contributing so subtly and naturally, it's still hard to argue with the overall luminous-toned, tranquil atmosphere this decision has cast. Pienaar

does get his moments: there's no missing his finger-twistingly virtuoso solos in Morley's *Now is the month of maying*. So a Very British Bravo for this one.

Charlotte Gardner

'Life Force'

Brahms Vier ernste Gesänge, Op 121 Bruch Kol Nidrei, Op 47 Fauré Après un rêve, Op 7 No 1 Gräfe Trombone Concerto Mahler Des Knaben Wunderhorn – Urlicht Pryor Thoughts of Love Rachmaninov Cello Sonata, Op 19 – Andante Schumann Fantasiestücke, Op 73

Peter Moore *trbn* James Baillieu *pf*

Rubicon © RCD1028 (67' • DDD)



Don't judge this disc by its cover. The artwork is the usual moody monochrome

of a young soloist in a vaguely industrial setting – so far, so contemporary. But the contents are something else entirely: music chosen by Peter Moore because, he says, it 'feels special to me' and which, taken together, portrays a young trombonist with a deeply romantic soul. There's something disarmingly likeable about an artist who feels as warmly about, say, *Thoughts of Love* – a sugar-coated concert waltz by Arthur Pryor, formerly of Sousa's band – as he does about Mahler's 'Urlicht', and who plays both with such genuine sympathy.

Moore is helped at every stage of the way by his duet partner, James Baillieu – who supports him with the same sensitivity to mood and colour that he brings to Lieder. And this is a real partnership: the way Baillieu teases gently at the piano part of the slow movement from Rachmaninov's Cello Sonata, or generates a hushed, pregnant space at the opening of Brahms's Op 121 songs, very audibly gives Moore something to work with and helps shape the direction of his long, carefully phrased lines.

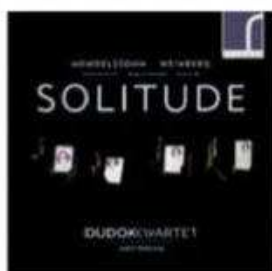
The Brahms, Bruch and Mahler transcriptions, with their prevailingly sombre atmosphere, perhaps convince more fully than Schumann's more mercurial *Fantasiestücke* – though Moore and Baillieu find something distinctive to say in everything here. I hope Moore will take it as the compliment that's intended when I say that his *pianissimo* tone in the Schumann is reminiscent of a horn. And that the two 'lollipops' – the Pryor and the amusingly jaunty Concerto by Friedebald Gräfe – have just as much character, providing enjoyable contrast in a predominantly serious (though always beautiful) recital. Richard Bratby



A multitude of colours: trumpeter Jonathan Freeman-Attwood and pianist Daniel-Ben Pienaar reimagine 17th-century English music

'Solitude'

Gesualdo Moro Lasso (arr David Faber) **Josquin** Mille regretz (arr Faber) **Mendelssohn** String Quartet No 6, Op 80 **Shostakovich** Two Pieces – Elegy **Weinberg** String Quartet No 3, Op 14
Dudok Quartet Amsterdam
Resonus © RES10215 (55' • DDD)



Creating a concept quartet album takes more than simply giving it a title. But this is something of a speciality of the Dudok Quartet Amsterdam (their previous discs have borne the titles 'Labyrinth' and 'Metamorphoses'). This latest one is called 'Solitude' and ranges from Mendelssohn's grief-stricken Op 80 quartet, written after the death of his beloved sister Fanny, to works by Weinberg and Shostakovich (Soviet composers, so goes the blurb, who sacrificed much for their art). All that is well and good, but does it work as a musical experience?

In a word, yes. The Dudok offer a driving account of the first movement

of Mendelssohn's last quartet, conveying vividly its rhetoric and sense of desperation, and their immaculate ensemble is very impressive. After an *Allegro assai* also high on grief, we reach the slow movement, which doesn't find the fragility of emotion that makes the early Elias recording from 2006 so special. Even if the Dudok have less of a vocal sobbing quality to their playing, the sense of grief is still palpable. And, while the finale doesn't perhaps have quite the same degree of febrile drive and desperation as the Elias and the hyper-reactive Ebène, it's telling nonetheless.

From here we dive back in time to Josquin's *Mille regretz*. How beautifully and directly this speaks to us from across the centuries in this sensitive arrangement by the Dudok's cellist David Faber – a feat that is repeated in the Gesualdo that closes the disc, with the group paring back vibrato to great effect and relishing its searing harmonies. There's plenty of raw emotion in the Dudok's reading of Shostakovich's concise Elegy, the first of his Two Pieces for string quartet,

which predates the 15 quartets and is a borrowing from an aria from *Lady Macbeth*.

Weinberg's Third Quartet comes from the following decade and is, like the Shostakovich, the work of a young man. The Dudok convey both the muscularity and the passages of quieter reflection in the driving opening *Presto*. Equally compelling is the extraordinary slow movement, with its unstable 5/4 time signature and its striking textures, from which the first violin offers a lonely soliloquy (here given a heartfelt intensity by Judith van Driel). The finale, built obsessively on a Shostakovian theme, gives all four players equal billing and veers between languor and abrupt bursts of energy, its changeability excellently caught by the Dudok. **Harriet Smith**

Mendelssohn – selected comparisons:

Elias Qt (5/07^R) (ALTO) ALC1303

Ebène Qt (4/13) (VIRG/ERAT) 464546-2

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William Kapell

Jed Distler pays tribute to the brilliant American pianist who oozed charisma, drive, ambition and intensity but whose life was cut tragically short while he still had so much more to offer

On Thursday morning October 29, 1953, BCPA Flight 304/44 crashed during its initial approach into San Francisco, killing all 19 people on board. One of the passengers was the 31-year-old American pianist William Kapell, returning home from a long Australian tour and on the cusp of artistic maturity. Kapell was a role model, a mentor and an inspirational figure for the outstanding generation of American pianists like Eugene Istomin, Gary Graffman, Leon Fleisher and others who emerged on the scene after the Second World War, much as Leonard Bernstein paved the way for aspiring American conductors. Today, more American-trained musicians than ever pursue international world-class careers. That was not the case in the 1940s, when Kapell and Bernstein were virtually the first ones to climb the celebrity ladder, so to speak.

Born on September 20, 1922, Kapell grew up in Yorkville neighbourhood on the East Side of Manhattan, New York, where his parents owned a bookshop. At the age of 10 he won his first competition, the prize being a turkey dinner with the pianist José Iturbi, who became a lifelong friend. Kapell's talent quickly blossomed under the tutelage of Dorothea Anderson La Follette. Two years later, La Follette brought him to Olga Samaroff, who attempted to reign in her brash young charge by instilling discipline and respect for textual fidelity. She assigned sizeable portions of Romantic repertoire to solidify his technical foundation and build up his sound.

Kapell's Naumburg competition first-place victory led to his highly acclaimed 1942 New York debut at

the Town Hall. That same year he caused a sensation when he played Khachaturian's flashy Piano Concerto, his first performance of a work that would become his signature piece. After signing with Columbia Artists Management,

Kapell became a popular concert attraction. Certainly, his natural charisma and handsome profile didn't hurt, together with the intensity, drive and ambition oozing from every pore – qualities

that informed his serious commitment to his craft. Kapell put considerable time into practice and study, meticulously logging his hours in a diary. Because Kapell was tough on himself, he saw no reason not to criticise others, although younger colleagues benefited from his generosity and feedback. Indeed,

conductor Eugene Ormandy once chided him for persistently recommending talented young pianists as potential soloists.

For all his identification with Romantic showpieces, Kapell fought to expand his repertoire and deepen his musicianship. He stuck his neck out for contemporary American composers – to the annoyance of conservative-minded managers and presenters – and was one of the few to champion Copland's Piano Variations and Piano Sonata in major international venues. Shortly after his marriage (in 1948) to Rebecca Anna Lou Melson (later Anna Lou Dehavenon), with whom he had two children, Kapell took a six-month sabbatical to study Mozart concertos and ornamentation. He sought advice from admired older artists such as Rudolf Serkin and Vladimir Horowitz, and even paid Artur Schnabel for lessons. Schnabel, incidentally, mistook Kapell's recording of Beethoven's

He valued clarity and definition, favoured gaunt brilliance over rounded sensuality, and disdained sentimentality

DEFINING MOMENTS

• 1941-42 – *Early success*

In 1941 Kapell won the Philadelphia Orchestra's youth competition, and played the Saint-Saëns Piano Concerto No 2 under Eugene Ormandy. His 1941 Naumburg competition victory resulted in his New York debut, a recital that earned him the Town Hall's award for 1942's outstanding concert by an artist under 30.

• 1946 – *Records his signature piece*

According to conductor Efrem Kurtz, Kapell learnt Khachaturian's Piano Concerto in a week. Its inherent bravura and virtuosic challenges ideally suited the pianist's ironclad technique and fiery temperament, and the piece became something of a calling card. Kapell's RCA Victor recording with Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston SO stood for years as the version of reference.

• 1949 – *California sabbatical*

Kapell, his wife Anna Lou and their newborn son, David, spent six months in La Jolla, where the pianist undertook an intensive study of Mozart's music and Mozart ornamentation.

• 1950 – *Collaboration with Jascha Heifetz*

Kapell was both surprised and flattered when violin legend Jascha Heifetz suggested that they record together, resulting in their 1950 Brahms D minor Sonata. Two years later, Heifetz held extensive informal chamber music sessions with Kapell and cellist Gregor Piatigorsky, with the idea of establishing a trio.

• 1953 – *Final year*

Kapell's busy concert schedule included a recital at the Frick Collection, New York; a residency at Pablo Casals's Prades Festival; and his final tour, on which he played 37 concerts in 14 weeks all over Australia. On his return flight from Sydney to the US, the plane crashed into King's Mountain near San Francisco on the morning of October 29; all of the passengers and crew were killed.




Piano Concerto No 2 for his own during a broadcast, only later learning the performer's true identity.

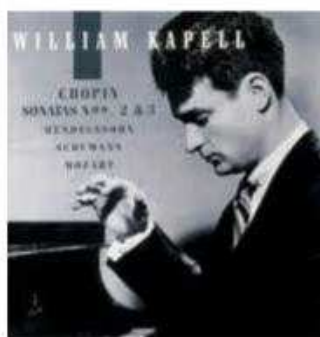
By and large, Kapell reflected his era. He was essentially a modernist who valued clarity and definition, who favoured gaunt brilliance over rounded sensuality, and who disdained sentimentality. His 1951 Rachmaninov *Paganini* Rhapsody with Fritz Reiner at the helm, for example, stresses the work's neoclassical profile and demonic undercurrents, whereas, conversely, he imbues the sparse keyboard textures of selected Shostakovich preludes and Copland's Piano Sonata with full-throated drama and character.

Kapell's posthumously issued Bach D major Partita (minus the unrecorded concluding Gigue) fuses carefully calibrated part playing and rhythmic ebullience, anticipating Glenn Gould in certain ways. By contrast, Kapell apparently tossed off Chopin mazurkas with little preparation, virtually sightreading them as the tape rolled.

Yet Kapell retained certain old-school attitudes eschewed by certain of his younger colleagues. His scintillating 1945 Liszt *Mephisto Waltz* No 1 occasionally embraces Busoni's amplifications, and a live 1953 Chopin Scherzo No 1 features interlocking octaves in the final bars à la Horowitz, rather than the conventional ascending scales. And in Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Kapell had begun to incorporate Horowitz's radical rewriting of the octave passages in 'The Great Gate of Kiev'.

Although the 10-odd hours' worth of discography encompassing studio sessions and myriad live concert recordings documents Kapell's artistic evolution to a reasonable degree, it nevertheless remains a foreshortened legacy. No one knew that more than his widow. Istomin never forgot her very first words after learning the tragic news of his death: 'But he still has so much to do.' 

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Chopin Piano Sonata in B minor, Op 58
William Kapell *pf*

RCA

Kapell required several sessions over a two-year period (1951-52) for recording this Chopin sonata to his satisfaction. The interpretation's staggering technical poise, clearly delineated structures, tonal variety and

expressive economy not only hold a mirror to Kapell's exacting artistic standards, but continue to stand the test of time.

Instrumental



Lindsay Kemp hears harpsichordist Justin Taylor in Scarlatti and Ligeti:

'One wonders if the juxtaposition of these two composers has produced cross-fertilisations of interpretation' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 84**



Michelle Assay listens to Vadym Kholodenko playing Scriabin:

'His affinity for Scriabin comes through in the way he contours phrases and his sensitive layering of complex textures' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**

JS Bach

Solo Violin Partitas – No 2, BWV1004; No 3, BWV1006. Solo Violin Sonata No 3, BWV1005

Sebastian Bohren *vn*

RCA Red Seal © 19075 83695-2 (72' • DDD)



This is not 'period' solo Bach – the lingering lick of vibrato on the last

note of the disc's opening phrase, from the Allemande of the Second Partita, reveals that in a moment – but neither is it of the old-school kind, big-toned and intense. The Swiss violinist Sebastian Bohren is for the most part sparing with vibrato, preferring to rely on satin-smooth tone, clean texture and a pleasingly loose-limbed, almost nonchalant ease of movement. These can only be achieved with a high level of technical command, and that is certainly what Bohren has; at no point is there any sense of the difficulty of this music, of strain in meeting its daunting challenges to bow and fingers, not even in the Chaconne or the giant Fugue of the Third Sonata. Bohren, it appears, has mastery over them all.

It makes for solo Bach that is uncommonly easy on the ear; and, in faster and more motoric movements such as the Prelude of the Third Partita or the freewheeling final Allegro of the Third Sonata, its nimble precision can be exhilarating. It also allows him to deliver a languid Third Sonata Largo and some light-footed dances in the Third Partita, including a nicely loping Loure. In the Fugue, too, he is able to maintain a lyrical quality in the entries of the chorale-based subject, an objective he identifies in his booklet interview. What he does not do so successfully, however, is address the music's rhetorical demands; where another player's phrasing might bend, relax and tauten, Bohren's is a little unvarying and lacking in imagination, making some of these movements edifices rather than living and breathing creations. That may be enough

to send you elsewhere but even so there must be few recordings of these great pieces in which the beauty of the violin-playing can in itself give so much pleasure.

Lindsay Kemp

JS Bach

'The Mono Tapes'

Fantasia and Fugue, 'Chromatic', BWV903. English Suite No 2, BWV807. Das wohltemperirte Clavier, Book 2: Preludes and Fugues – No 5, BWV874; No 10, BWV879; No 17, BWV886; No 20, BWV889; No 23, BWV892; No 24, BWV893

Friedrich Gulda *clav*

Berlin Classics mono © 0301063BC (60' • ADD)

Recorded 1978-79



Eighteen years after his death at the age of 69, Friedrich Gulda remains something

of an iconoclast. Following his victory at the Geneva Competition in 1946, he was considered, along with Badura-Skoda and Demus, one of a triumvirate of post-war Viennese pianists. Yet his refusal to conform to the expected norms of a classical career – his cultivation of jazz; his frequent performance of his own compositions; his unconventional concert programming, dress and venues – has hindered any facile critical assessment of his legacy.

Gulda first became interested in the clavichord in 1971 through the influence of Paul and Linpe Fuchs. Just two years later he was performing the entire *Well-Tempered* on clavichord. The recordings on this disc, however, date from 1978-79 and were made by Gulda himself on what the producer, Christoph Stickel, describes as 'rudimentary recording technology ... not professionally monitored'. The tapes themselves, owned by Gulda's pupil Thomas Knapp, who also contributes an interesting background essay to the booklet, were in terrible shape and had to be converted from analogue to digital. This was done, we are assured, in the most

conservative manner to preserve Gulda's playing to the fullest extent possible. The first part of the recording, Preludes and Fugues Nos 5, 23 and 17 and the *Chromatic* Fantasy, were recorded on a Widmayer clavichord; the second, Preludes and Fugues Nos 10, 20, and 24 and the *A minor English Suite*, on a Neupert.

To whatever extent Gulda's experience with the clavichord may have informed his piano-playing, he plays the clavichord like a pianist. I hear little to indicate that he was interested in the potential of the instrument per se or exploring its intrinsic sonorous capacities. Nor is there evidence of a nodding acquaintance with contemporary thinking about matters of tempo, articulation and dance-inspired character in Baroque music which, thanks to the historically informed performance movement, was in full flower at the time.

That said, there is a certain dazzling virtuosity in these performances. One must admire Gulda's clarity of thought and sheer facility, despite his driven, metronomic tempos and his thick-skinned indifference to the shapes and contours of Bach's musical gestures. My greatest surprise was that there's nothing here of the freedom and improvisatory fire that one might have imagined Gulda would bring to Bach from his experience with jazz. It's difficult to imagine listeners returning to these as they might to other beloved Bach interpretations but they are nevertheless *sui generis*, thoroughly considered and certainly provide food for thought. **Patrick Rucker**

JS Bach

Solo Cello Suite No 1, BWV1007 (arr Dunford). Suite, BWV995. Solo Violin Partita No 2, BWV1004 – Chaconne (arr Dunford)

Thomas Dunford *archlute*

Alpha © ALPHA361 (56' • DDD)



The Paris-born lutenist Thomas Dunford is known for his sensitive,



Satin-smooth tone: Sebastian Bohren is nimble, precise and easy on the ear in solo Bach

imaginative continuo work in ensembles such as Jonathan Cohen's Arcangelo. Indeed, this year he formed his own Baroque ensemble, Jupiter. So one might expect his solo playing to exhibit a certain expansiveness, theatricality even, or at least a liberal use of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic ornamentation.

But no. What we get with Dunford's Bach is instead a certain purity, a relatively unadorned line which assimilates articulation in favour of flow and clarity. The expression – of form or emotion – is all in the phrasing, which relies on the art of silence as much as a subtle rubato. It's quite beautiful and refreshing, as though excrescences have been shorn away to reveal the classical architecture underneath.

In Dunford's arrangement of Bach's First Cello Suite, the implied bass line is less manifested than expected. Appoggiaturas are favoured over trills; mordants are similarly eschewed. One has only to hear the superb, liberally ornamented 2012 recording by Dunford's erstwhile teacher, Hopkinson Smith (Naïve, 8/13), to realise Dunford is after something different here. (It should be noted, too, that Dunford is playing an archlute, a smaller instrument than Smith's theorbo, though both have extended necks with unstopped bass strings.)

Bach's own arrangement for lute of his Fifth Cello Suite is more richly realised in performance; the Prelude's rapid fugue also lends it a certain propulsion that looks back to the previous movement's crisp Gigue and forwards to the final work on the recording, a brilliant, dramatic reading of Bach's D minor Chaconne, again in Dunford's arrangement. **William Yeoman**

Beethoven

Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op 43.

Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme, 'Eroica', Op 35

Leslie Howard *pf*

Heritage © HTGCD187 (80' • DDD)



Contrary to the blurb on the back of the CD, Leslie Howard is not the first to record Beethoven's *The Creatures of Prometheus* in the composer's solo piano arrangement complete. Cyprien Katsaris did so more than 20 years ago (Piano21). The pianists couldn't be more different if they tried. Katsaris's interpretation minimises the music's orchestral origins, favouring the kind of pointed articulation Glenn Gould

loved, replete with tenutos, stresses and chordal balances that are essentially pianistically oriented. Conversely, Howard's wider dynamic range and more massive sonority (abetted by more resonant engineering) brings the listener smack into the theatre pit.

In Howard's hands, the *Allegro con brio* section in Act 1's opening number conveys more of the music's *opera buffa* character than in Katsaris's scaled-down reading. While Katsaris clips the F major *Allegro vivace* Minuet to mincing and unsettling effect, Howard's grounded rhythm and exuberant lilt are exactly what the music needs. To be certain, Katsaris brings a lightness of texture and a suppler double note technique to the Act 2 Terzetto, compared with Howard's plainer execution. Howard, however, is keener on maintaining balletic momentum in the finale, in contrast to Katsaris's fussy inner voices and underlined accompaniments.

Howard faces tougher catalogue competition in the *Eroica* Variations. In the Introduction's 'a tre' variation, for example, Howard doesn't keep the ground bass in consistently steady perspective against the flowing counterline crossing back and forth between treble and bass registers, although the contrapuntal interplay and gnarly double

Bach
Sei Solo

Mats Bergström
Guitar

Sei Solo.

Sonatas & Partitas
BWV 1001—1006

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Ingmar Bergman

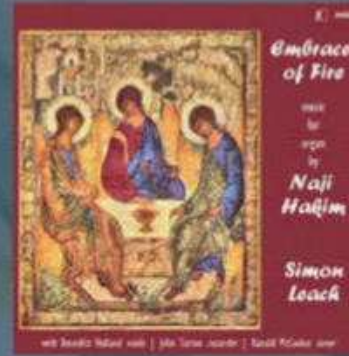
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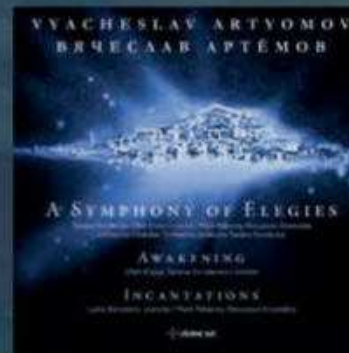
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notes in 'a quattro' come off powerfully. While Var 2's cadenza takes imaginative wing, Howard's triplet runs tend to get sticky in contrast to Emanuel Ax's incisively shaded fingerwork (Sony, 7/13).

He heavily pounds out Var 3's repeated chords but brings a deft and humorous touch to Var 4 that compensates for occasional unevenness in the left-hand runs. Howard nails Var 7's canon at the octave to perfection, fiercely characterising the contrapuntal repartee and the syncopated accents. Perhaps he works too hard juggling Var 13's thick accompaniment against the obsessively repeating B flat top line (Clifford Curzon's effortless control and deadpan demeanour remain unsurpassed – Decca, 1/72), yet the fugal finale abounds with dramatic impetus and daring pedal effects, as one should expect from a pianist of Leslie Howard's protean gifts. **Jed Distler**

Busoni

Elegien, K249. An die Jugend, K254

Carlo Grante *pf*

Music & Arts ® CD1290 (62' • DDD)



The nicely chosen image on the front cover shows a nude, elderly woman,

depicted from the back, gazing as if into the past. This is Umberto Boccioni's portrait of his mother, completed in 1909, the same year as Marinetti's Futurist manifesto, and a prime example of the artist's transition from neo-Impressionism to Futurism.

Busoni himself considered his *Elegies* as a 'transformation' in his musical output; the first is actually titled 'Nach der Wendung' ('After the turning point'). Shortly prior to their completion in 1907, he had published his own *Sketch of a New Aesthetic of Music*, calling for freedom from pre-existing forms and rules. Scarcely as forwards-looking as close contemporaries, such as Scriabin's Fifth Sonata or Schoenberg's Second Quartet, the *Elegies* could equally well be illustrated by Paul Klee's *Angelus novus*: a figure apparently moving forwards while looking backwards. They certainly create a bridge between Busoni's past and future works – No 3 is raw material for the future *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, for instance, while No 4, with its reworking of 'Greensleeves', is an arrangement of earlier incidental music for Gozzi's *Turandot*.

Three of the four pieces making up *An die Jugend* (1909) showcase Busoni's trademark art of creative arrangement, most curiously in the second, which

juxtaposes, then superimposes Bach's D major Prelude and Fugue: a close cousin to Godowsky's then recent arrangements of Chopin's Studies.

Carlo Grante has the first-rate technique and fanatical devotion necessary for this repertoire. So far as colour and timbral imagination go, however, his *Elegies* lag far behind Marc-André Hamelin. This may be partly due to the matt tone-quality and congested bass register of his chosen Bösendorfer. Still, for all my reservations over this instrument, the sound falls more gratefully on the ear than Geoffrey Douglas Madge's clangorous Steinway. Confusingly, Grante reverses the order of the second and third pieces of *An die Jugend*, something his less than entirely lucid booklet essay fails to mention.

Michelle Assay

An die Jugend – selected comparison:

Madge (4/88) (PHIL) 420 740-2PH6

Elegies – selected comparison:

Hamelin (11/13) (HYPER) CDA67951/3

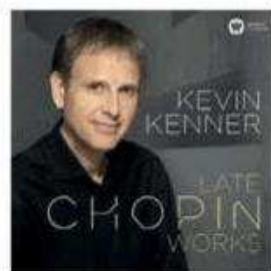
Chopin

'Late Chopin Works'

Barcarolle, Op 60. Mazurkas – Op 56; Op 63; No 49, Op 68 No 4 (reconstr Kenner). Nocturne No 18, Op 62 No 2. Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58

Kevein Kenner *pf*

Warner Classics ® 9029 56352-0 (65' • DDD)



When it comes to Schubert and Chopin, who died in their thirties, the concept

of 'late works' is somewhat curious. Interpreters and audiences may be predisposed to hear signs of resignation and/or creative liberation (cf Adorno on Beethoven: 'touched by death, the hand of the master sets free the masses of material that he used to form'). But Chopin's late works are more like a second wind than a last breath, as Kevin Kenner (a Moscow and Warsaw finalist in 1990) intelligently conveys.

Regrettably absent is the *Polonaise-fantasia*, which would be the perfect illustration of Adorno's point. But this is compensated for by Kenner's thought-provoking 'reconstruction' of what is often wrongly referred to as Chopin's last work, the Op 68 No 4 Mazurka (it was in all probability discarded from an earlier opus). This problematic piece, whose manuscript was rediscovered in 1951, has been performed in a variety of ways, lasting from under two minutes to, as here, over four. Kenner follows up the F major middle section (often omitted because of its

conjectural status) with a tastefully realised descant for the return of the opening, in line with Chopin's renewed interest in counterpoint.

Here, as in the other Mazurkas and especially the B minor Sonata, Kenner's sense of the long line and overall architecture is as impressive as his idiomatic phrasing. Admittedly the Barcarolle, placed first on the disc, lacks the delicious lilt of Hough's rendition (Hyperion, 5/10) but it too is persuasive in its symphonic flow. Edoardo Torbianelli is available for anyone who cares to hear some of this music on an 1842 Pleyel (Glossa, 3/18). But for a modern account, Kenner stands as tall as any of his rivals. **Michelle Assay**

Godowsky

Godowsky Elegy for the Left Hand Alone.

Passacaglia. Studies on the Chopin Études – No 7 (Op 10 No 5); No 13 (Op 10 No 6).

Symphonic Metamorphosis of Wein, Weib und Gesang JS Bach/Godowsky Violin Sonata No 1, BWV1001 Chopin/Godowsky Waltz No 6, 'Minute', Op 64 No 1 Saint-Saëns/Godowsky The Swan

Łukasz Kwiatkowski *pf*

Dux ® DUX1464 (55 • DDD)



Thirty years ago, when only a handful of Godowsky's compositions

(originals and arrangements) were available or recorded, one would have been more than grateful for this showcase of Godowsky's wide-ranging art. Today, with over 40 CDs entirely devoted to his music and many more featuring one or more title, his entire output is currently out there. In other words, there is now stiff competition in the Godowsky market.

Make no mistake, Łukasz Kwiatkowski (b1981, Łódź) is a fine pianist; but while there is much to admire about his playing, while the actual choice of works is unique to this CD and while he has been exceptionally well recorded, one turns back to superior – often only marginally so – earlier recordings of this music. I voiced a similar reaction in reviewing Laurent Wagschal's Godowsky recital (Evidence, 10/16), which includes three titles in common with Kwiatkowski's. There is little to choose between them in the Violin Sonata, though Wagschal includes the brief cadenza in the Fantasia movement (Scherbakov is another who omits it – Marco Polo, 11/97) and takes a more leisurely view of *Wein, Weib und Gesang*.

The single (major) original work that Kwiatkowski includes is the Passacaglia based on the opening of Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony. This is a fine account but, as is evident from that pre-eminent Godowskian Marc-André Hamelin (Hyperion, 3/02), there is much more to be had from its 44 variations, cadenza and fugue than heard here. When it comes to unravelling dense polyphony with lucid lyricism, the Canadian is in a class of his own.

The *Swan* transcription, Godowsky's most-recorded work, is matter-of-fact beside the magic of Cherkassky (and, by the way, there is no evidence, as asserted by Kwiatkowski in his booklet, that, when Saint-Saëns wrote it, 'the piece *Swan* illustrates a dying swan'). Again, hear Jorge Bolet play *The Swan* (1974) and the *Elegy for the Left Hand Alone* (1982), the latter a small masterpiece of the genre: at nearly a minute longer (3'12") in Bolet's hands, it is profoundly touching (both are on 'Ambassador from the Golden Age' – Marston, 7/15). **Jeremy Nicholas**

Hasse • Weiss

Hasse Two Sonatas **Weiss** Sonata, WeissSW35. Prelude, WeissSW27/1. Passacaglia, WeissSW18/6

Jadran Duncumb *lute*

Audax © ADX13713 (57' • DDD)



If you didn't know that Hasse wrote music for the lute, don't be hard on yourself. I didn't either; but in any case it turns out that the two sonatas recorded here – one of them for the first time – were originally for keyboard and transcribed for lute by an unknown 18th-century hand. They thus make busy work at times for the fingers of Jadran Duncumb, but he is well on top of things – indeed, in the second movement of the A major Sonata he restores some of the original's notes that the arranger left out. Both works are absolutely in the fashionable *galant* style of the mid-18th century with its clear-cut harmonies and polite, singable melodies that like to escape into triplets. It's not the kind of music you would associate with the lute but it is certainly a pleasant discovery.

With the lutenist Weiss we are on more familiar – indeed central – Baroque lute territory. This is music with the grandeur and harmonic expansiveness of Bach but with its idiomatically rendered textures more svelte and easy on the ear than the often rather keyboardy lute compositions

we have from Bach. But this is good music in its own right, too, well deserving of greater currency; Duncumb calls the D minor Suite a 'towering monument of the lute repertoire' and, hearing him play it with such confidence and freedom, it is hard to disagree – just listen to the assurance and exuberance of the final *Allegro*. The Passacaglia that ends the disc, too, is one whose cumulative power draws you in just as it should.

All of these pieces Duncumb presents with clean but deep and singing tone, faultless balancing of voices, sound architectural sense and delicate but nicely judged dynamic shading. Only some persistent extraneous noise on the recording – I can't tell whether from Duncumb's fingerboard or his breathing – detracts slightly from the pleasure. This is his first solo disc and already I'm looking forward to the second. **Lindsay Kemp**

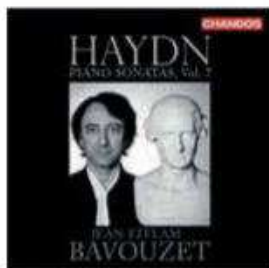
Haydn

'Piano Sonatas, Vol 7'

Piano Sonatas – HobXVI:5; HobXVI:6; HobXVI:31; HobXVI:47; HobXVI:48

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10998 (73' • DDD)



Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's series of Haydn's piano sonatas reaches Vol 7, borne aloft by the momentum of almost unanimously laudatory reviews and a string of accolades including a brace of *Gramophone* Editor's Choices over the past eight years. There's no sign of a mid-series lull, either, on the new disc, which, like its predecessors, offers listening delight from first note to last.

These five sonatas range from the early No 6 (1760 or before), unusually in four movements and designated 'Partita', to the two-movement No 48 (1789), commissioned by Breitkopf to 'raise the level of a "musical potpourri"' (annotator Marc Vignal) that the company was planning. The other composers and works in this 'potpourri' are not mentioned in the booklet but it can only be assumed that its level was indeed raised by this sonata of utmost individuality: an *Andante* more akin to a free fantasia and a *Presto* in sonata-rondo form – a favourite style of Haydn's but one not exploited anywhere else in his piano music. There's also the beautiful E major, No 31 (1776), the serenity of whose opening *Moderato* is cast into sharp relief by the austere, Bachian three-part invention of its central *Allegretto* and the antics of its variation finale. Two other

works, No 5 (described as 'Divertimento') and No 57 are of dubious provenance; Vignal expertly delineates the authenticity or otherwise of all these works and untangles their chronology and the conflicting numbering systems, while offering little further insight into the music itself.

The insight is communicated by the fingers of Bavouzet and by his palpable affection for these works. As before, the score is a starting point for him, not holy writ, and he grants himself full liberty to negotiate with Haydn, ornamenting and varying as he goes along, yet never obscuring the music's purpose or pulling the spotlight away from it and towards himself. His Yamaha sounds well in Potton Hall, a little more presently recorded than Marc-André Hamelin (at Henry Wood Hall) for Hyperion. There is still some way to go but this volume is another stepping stone towards what must surely end up as a major modern recording landmark in the Haydn discography. **David Thresher**

Ligeti • D Scarlatti

Ligeti Continuum. Hungarian Rock (Chaconne).

Passacaglia ungherese **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas – Kk18; Kk27; Kk32; Kk115; Kk141; Kk175; Kk208; Kk213; Kk239; Kk481; Kk492; Kk519

Justin Taylor *hpd*

Alpha © ALPHA399 (69' • DDD)



Like David Greilsammer's inspired piano pairing of Scarlatti and Cage (Sony, 6/14), this disc from rising French harpsichordist Justin Taylor finds a perfect partner for the quirky Italian, this time in the three similarly oddball pieces contributed to the harpsichord repertoire by György Ligeti. Both recitals achieve the feat of bringing the 18th- and 20th-century worlds together without detriment to either, so that it really does begin to be difficult to separate one from the other, such is the epoch-defying individuality of the composers involved.

The Scarlatti sonatas are almost all relatively familiar ones – they include the chord-crushes of Kk175, machine-gun repeated notes of Kk141, swinging hand-crossings of Kk27, tender complaints of Kk481 and delicate *cantabiles* of Kk32 and Kk208 – but Taylor ensures that they sound fresh. With a technique both neat and quick, he spins the music in smoothly contoured paragraphs, adding tightly curling ornamentation here and there but without hindering the music's natural flow



A perfect blend of heroic and lyrical: Leonardo Pierdomenico's debut album of Liszt is hugely impressive – see review on page 86

and rolling energy – the only exception being a slightly ponderous Kk208. It results in an expertly paced Kk213 and absorbing performances of Kk115, Kk175 and Kk18, the last of which has the coursing momentum of a speeded-up film of cloud movement. With Scarlatti-playing like this it's hard to see how you might want for more.

But then, there's Ligeti. The Hungarian put Scarlatti alongside Chopin, Schumann and Debussy in his personal keyboard pantheon, and it is not hard to see his influence in the elegantly roaming right-hand lines of the *Passacaglia ungherese*, the driving dance-beat of *Hungarian Rock* or the repeated notes, like a crazy Kk141 or Kk519, of the extraordinary, mesmeric *Continuum*.

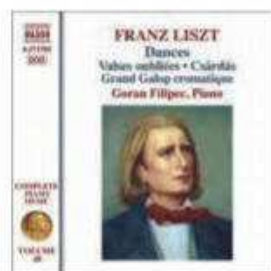
Overall, one has to admire the natural freedom of Taylor's playing in both composers and wonder if their juxtaposition has produced cross-fertilisations of interpretation. Would he have dared to syncopate the right-hand repeated notes of Kk492 without *Hungarian Rock* in his mind? Or trod so suavely through the *Passacaglia* without Scarlatti's example? Who knows? But, whatever the case, this disc is an exhilarating vindication of the harpsichord as a solo instrument for music old and new. **Lindsay Kemp**

Liszt

'Complete Piano Music, Vol 49 - Dances' Valses oubliées, S215. Two Csárdás, S225. Csárdás macabre, S224. Mephisto-Polka, S217. Mazurka brillante, S221. Caprice-Valses, S214 - No 1, Valse de bravoure; No 2, Valse mélancolique. Valse-impromptu, S213. Valse de concert, S430. Grand galop chromatique - S219; S219bis

Goran Filipec *pf*

Naxos ® 8 573705 (69' • DDD)



The more I continued listening to this recital, the more I felt that it was one of the finest all-Liszt discs I had heard for a very long time. Produced by the pianist himself, it is also very well recorded (at Campus Fichtenhain, Krefeld, Germany) by engineer Matteo Costa.

This is Vol 49 of Naxos's Liszt Complete Piano Music and must count among the most successful of the series, not merely because of Filipec but because of the felicitous programme. It provides a dance sequence that is both consistently varied in metre (waltzes followed by csárdás, polka, mazurka, more waltzes and two galops) and has some of the brilliant

virtuoso works of the late 1830s rubbing shoulders with their experimental near-namesakes of half a century later: compare, for instance, the four *Valses oubliées* (1881-84, tracks 1-4), played with immense charm, and the four earlier waltzes (tracks 10-13) that prompt Filipec's most ardent, unfettered displays of virtuosity, exploiting the full sonority of his Kawai grand. The final two tracks feature the rarely heard simplified version of the *Grand galop chromatique* succeeded by the celebrated original, a crowd-pleaser with which Liszt often ended his recitals. To put Filipec's bravura performance of this in perspective, both Ogdon and Lang Lang are a full 27 seconds slower; only Fiorentino and Cziffra (who owned the piece) are faster and – hush! – I think I prefer the Croatian.

Filipec has three of the most important attributes that make a great pianist: artist, architect and acrobat. Indeed, the only thing that lets down this impressive release is the frightful painting of Liszt on the cover, based, presumably, on one of Franz Hanfstaengl's 1857 series of photographic portraits. Would not one of the hundreds of photos of Liszt have been preferable? At least, something a little more classy to compliment the contents.

Jeremy Nicholas

Liszt

Scherzo and March, S177. Ballades – No 1, S170; No 2, S171. La romanesca, S252a. Deux Légendes, S175. Csárdás macabre, D224
Leonardo Pierdomenico *pf*
 Piano Classics © PCL10151 (69' • DDD)



This is the stunning debut recording of Leonardo Pierdomenico,

a 25-year-old native of Pescara in the Abruzzo region of Italy and a graduate of the Santa Cecilia Academy in Rome. A semi-finalist at the 2016 Queen Elisabeth competition, he won the jury's discretionary prize at the Cliburn last summer. His interesting programme spans Liszt's career, with the early *La romanesca* composed in Paris, the Scherzo and March and two Ballades from the Weimar years, the *St Francis Legends* from 1860s Rome and the late *Csárdás macabre* from Budapest. Would that half the seasoned Lisztians I know had Pierdomenico's keen ear for stylistic differentiation within this half-century of repertoire. His highly developed technique and cultivated sound, both adaptable to a variety of affects, are wedded to those twin essentials for artistic Liszt-playing: imagination combined with thoroughgoing, scrupulous musicality.

His prodigious *prestissimo leggiero*, the ability to play extremely fast yet lightly, lends his Scherzo and March and *Csárdás macabre* quicksilver speed and tremendous power that never devolves into banging. His *fioritura*, that delicate filigree enhancement of melody used by Liszt and Chopin, envelops the D flat Ballade (No 1) with sensual charm and imbues 'St Francis's Sermon to the Birds' with shimmering colours. *La romanesca* speaks with the chasteness of a Bartók folk-song transcription, maintaining its rustic simplicity through successive elaborations and embellishment. The exalted sound-painting of 'St Francis Walking on the Waves' is realised by Pierdomenico's mastery of the 'crescendo within crescendo' effect, the scarcely perceptible pulling back at critical moments in an ostensibly seamless sound trajectory, unleashing huge volumes of sound that never exceed the resources of the piano. The B minor Ballade (No 2) occupies a vast canvas, though Pierdomenico avoids the overstated or melodramatic, opting instead for a heartfelt earnestness that creates a perfect symbiosis of the heroic and lyrical.

On the basis of his Liszt alone – and one may hear him in other repertoire on YouTube – I don't hesitate to suggest that Peirdeomenico is a musician of rare sensitivity and vision, and that following his further development will be a pleasure.

Patrick Rucker

Paganini

24 Caprices for Solo Violin, Op 1

Roman Simovic *vn*

LSO Live © (two discs for the price of one)

LSO5083 (95' • DDD)

Recorded 2007



'I wanted my interpretation of these seminal works to sound fresh and

different', says LSO Leader Roman Simovic in the forward to this, his debut solo album. 'I took some risks here and there'; and while one would expect nothing less of any violinist recording this repertoire, Simovic has definitely delivered.

Tempo is one obvious area in which a few risks have been taken. For instance, while at 2'02" Simovic's Caprice No 1 is only four seconds behind Hadelich's and Perlman's, his No 24 stretches all the way to 6'06", two minutes slower than either Perlman or Zehtnair. Pleasures this reaps include a particularly pathos-filled Var 3, some fabulously sharp and distinct triple-stops in Var 8 and a gorgeous sense of time suspended in Var 10. My own tastes miss the wild, hurdy-gurdyish quality that speed can bring to the chromatics and acciaccaturas of Var 2 but that's not to say that I can't appreciate the greater elegance that Simovic's take brings to the table. Another 'risk', perhaps, was the decision to not follow the score's *piano* markings in No 24's final variation. However, if you can live with the slight loss of capriciousness this entails, it does unquestionably create a sense of majestic build-up; the triumph of Everest being scaled.

Other elements to enjoy include the husky and slightly peasantry sound quality Simovic has brought to No 6, 'The Trill'; and, indeed, his extensive timbral palette is always bringing fresh moments to savour: compare the faintly raw edges of 'The Trill' with the neat sweetness with which he presents the opening Rondo theme of No 9, 'La chasse', and later his airy flute imitations.

This is a fine solo disc debut and one that offers a genuine and quality alternative to the existing pile. **Charlotte Gardner**

Rachmaninov

Complete Études-tableaux

Steven Osborne *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68188 (62' • DDD)



Before his flight to Scandinavia during the Bolshevik Revolution, Rachmaninov's last

recitals in Russia included some of the Op 39 *Études-tableaux*. One St Petersburg critic wrote: 'In the *Études*, Rachmaninov appears in a new light. The soft lyricist begins to employ a more severe, concentrated and deepened mode of expression'; while a Moscow critic concluded: 'Who among Russian pianists is the strongest, most radiant? For me, the choice is clear: Rachmaninov.' So from the beginning, it would seem, the new compositional directions and attitudes inherent in the *Études-tableaux* were apparent.

Steven Osborne's thrilling new recording leaves no doubt of the *Études*' unique position in Rachmaninov's oeuvre. As brilliant as Osborne's execution is throughout, it is his freshness of conception that, for me, is most striking. Naturally, every agogic, dynamic and tempo indication is scrupulously observed. On that firm foundation Osborne layers his inerrant rhythmic sense, chaste rubato, his seemingly infinite dynamic palette and, above all, his beautifully sculpted singing line.

In the more poetic *Études* – Op 33 Nos 2 and 7, Op 39 Nos 2 and 8 among them – melodies sing unimpeded by sentimentality or over-indulgent rubato. After establishing several planes of aural activity in Op 33 No 3, arrival at the *Meno mosso* occurs within a hushed *ppp* that is positively breathtaking in its ethereal beauty. Probably no composer was more obsessed with the sounds of bells than Rachmaninov. Their evocation here is fascinatingly varied: distant tolls in Op 33 No 4, tocsins in Op 39 No 3 and festive peals in Op 33 No 6. The desperate flights of Op 33 No 5 and Op 39 No 1 are as frantically driven as anything in Chopin. Two mini-epics stand out. The implacable force of Op 33 No 8, bordering on violence, takes no quarter and brooks no expressive compromise. And the most famous of the set, the E flat minor, Op 39 No 5, stands as a model of pacing. Its shapely melody soars mightily above (and below) thick chordal textures, evoking a vast battlefield where, for once, the pianist isn't among the casualties.

It's perhaps no surprise that Osborne, the past master of the French Impressionists,

should bring us so singular a Rachmaninov, at once architecturally magnificent and abundant in rich detail. These interpretations, with shadows of ambiguity, foreboding akin to terror and a profound, tender regret, anchor this music incontrovertibly in its historical moment: the waning of the Russian Silver Age. Rachmaninov fans won't want to miss this; nor will connoisseurs of intelligent, meaningful piano-playing. **Patrick Rucker**

Scriabin

Six Preludes, Op 13. Five Preludes, Op 16. Piano Sonatas – No 4, Op 30; No 5, Op 53. Poème tragique, Op 34. Poème satanique, Op 36. Eight Études, Op 42. Vers la flamme, Op 72

Vadym Kholodenko *pf*

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2255 (72' • DDD)



Vadym Kholodenko's stated goal is to reveal the cohesion in the chronological

development of Scriabin's musical language. He chooses his programme accordingly to represent each stage of this evolution: from Chopinesque allusions in the early Preludes to mystic exhalation in the composer's last completed work, *Vers la flamme*.

Gold Medal winner at the 2013 Van Cliburn Competition, Kholodenko first came to my attention from his appearance in the third Horowitz Competition in Kiev, where he was awarded second prize in the junior category (bow-tied and with incipient moustache at the age of 13). His mature affinity for Scriabin comes through in the way he contours phrases, sentences and paragraphs, and in his sensitive layering of complex textures. Though his Fazioli would not be my instrument of choice for this (or any) repertoire, and the dry-ish recording quality doesn't help, it certainly makes for a charming, well-rounded treble sound in the slow episodes.

Where Kholodenko is least persuasive is in conveying a sense of abandon. So there is less uplift than there might be in the Op 42 Studies (particularly the ever-popular No 5) and especially in the Fifth Sonata. For the nonpareil of exhilaration in the latter, hear Richter, who plays like a man possessed. Kholodenko makes a curious diversion from the score at the final peroration, where he suddenly hits the brakes rather than the accelerator (perhaps he was thinking of how the composer's son-in-law Sofronitsky handles this moment). Keeping the sound on the pedal for an extra 20 seconds after the last note is another surprising interpretative choice (to put it kindly).

For all that, a great deal of thought has clearly gone into Kholodenko's interpretations and his aim to demonstrate continuity across the distinct phases of Scriabin's output is certainly achieved.

Michelle Assay

Piano Sonata No 5 – selected comparison:

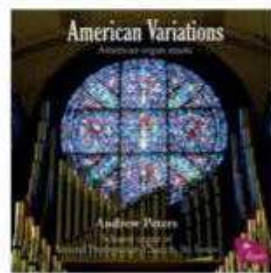
Richter (DG) 477 8122GB9

'American Variations'

Buck Concert Variations on 'The Star Spangled Banner', Op 23 **Christiansen** March **Copland** Passacaglia (transcr Feserman) **Diemer** Folk Hymn Sketches (excs) **Hailstork** Suite – Prelude **B Harbach** Fantasy and Fugue on 'Swing low, sweet chariot' **Ives** Variations on 'America' **U Kay** Suite No 1 – Finale **Kennicott Davis** Pastorale **Mader** October Interlude **Peck** In the Garden **Roem** Rain Over the Quaker Graveyard **Andrew Peters** *org*

Regent © REGCD508 (72' • DDD)

Played on the Schantz organ of Second Presbyterian Church, St Louis, MO



This welcome 15-track anthology is topped and tailed by two of the best-known concert

organ pieces by native American composers, Dudley Buck's playful *Star Spangled Banner* Concert Variations and Charles Ives's riotous *Variations on 'America'*. Although many of the intervening tracks will, I suspect, be unfamiliar territory, this comprehensive survey of some of the best American organ music should do much to correct any such ignorance. Pianists would, I hope, forgive Andrew Peters for including John Feserman's excellent transcription of Copland's monumental early Passacaglia, composed under the tutelage of Nadia Boulanger, who also taught Adolphus Hailstork (*b1941*) and, from an earlier generation, Katherine Kennicott Davis (1892-1980). Her charming *Pastorale* of 1918 starts off à la Vienne before slipping effortlessly into quasi-Alfred Hollins mode.

Continuing the 'spot the influence' game, the four excerpts taken from the *Folk Hymn Sketches* by Emma Lou Diemer (*b1927*) range from Mendelssohn to Hindemith (the delicious 'All things bright and beautiful'). Ned Rorem's evocative *Rain Over the Quaker Graveyard* (1982) gives Messiaen a good run for his money. Russell Peck's *In the Garden* provides the ideal vehicle to display the vast dynamic range of this 60-rank neoclassical 1965 Schantz organ.

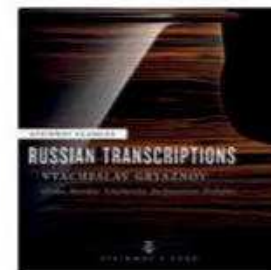
With excellent booklet notes, crystal-clear engineering and stylish, sparkling playing, this attractive disc is well worth exploring. **Malcolm Riley**

'Russian Transcriptions'

Borodin String Quartet No 2 – Notturmo **Glinka** Valse-fantaisie **Prokofiev** On the Dnieper, Op 51 (excs) **Rachmaninov** How fair this spot, Op 21 No 7. Night is mournful, Op 26 No 12. Vocalise, Op 34 No 14. Polka italienne **Tchaikovsky** The Nutcracker, Op 71 – Waltz of the Flowers (all arr Gryaznov)

Vyacheslav Gryaznov *pf*

Steinway & Sons © STNS30082 (61' • DDD)



The art of the piano transcription is alive and kicking – or, more accurately, alive and

singing in the hands Vyacheslav Gryaznov, whose solo CD debut for Steinway & Sons showcases the 36-year-old pianist-composer's considerable abilities in this genre. The Notturmo from Borodin's Second String Quartet loses nothing in translation via Gryaznov's acute ear for timbre and registration, and actually gains something once the piano's full range opens up. Conversely, Gryaznov overloads Tchaikovsky's Waltz of the Flowers with fussy caesuras, tenutos and ritardandos that defuse the music's soaring momentum.

He paints Rachmaninov's 'How fair this spot' with angular brushstrokes and dark oils that radically contrast with Earl Wild's shimmering treble-orientated pastels. Likewise, his treatment of the ubiquitous 'Vocalise' stands its linear ground throughout, eschewing the bubbly arpeggiation that Zoltán Kocsis tacks on to the final section. At first I suspected an extra pair of hands had joined in to help keep the *Italian Polka*'s swirling figurations and leaping octave melodies in clean perspective. Wishful thinking!

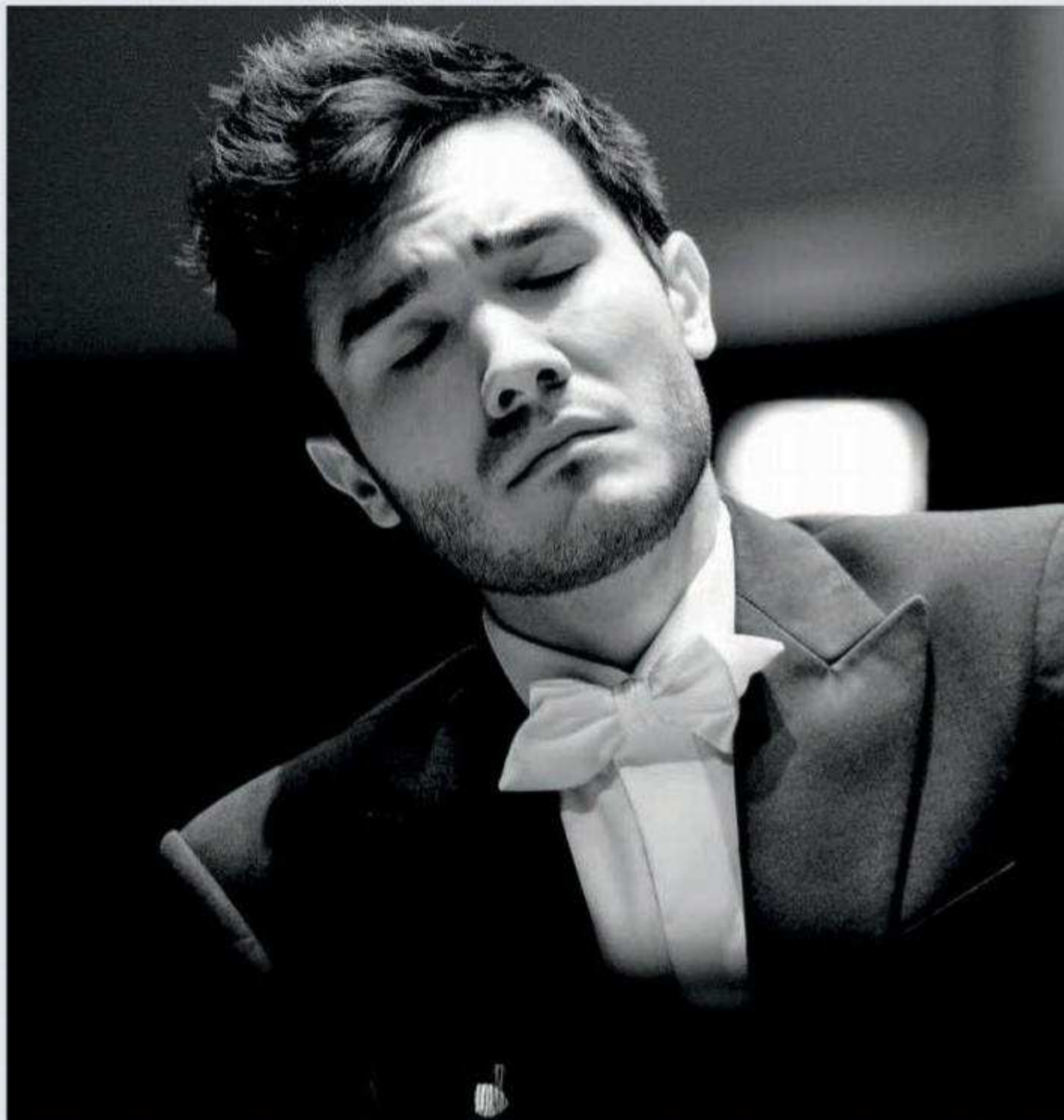
On the Dnieper may be Prokofiev's least performed ballet. The six movements that Gryaznov presents benefit from his creative liberties and fleshing-out of textures with convincing inner voices, fresh changes of register and stronger dynamic profile. As such, the concluding Variation, Finale and Coda emerges as more of a virtuoso tour de force and exciting stage presentation than what transpires in Prokofiev's original text.

Lastly, Gryaznov transforms Glinka's *Valse-fantaisie* from an elegant, unprepossessing and sometimes rambling salon piece into a cannily crafted concert-hall showpiece, where the melodies soar to orchestral effect, yet the pianist retains top billing. That's the nature of the genre, and Gryaznov understands this. Moreover, Gryaznov's transcriptions are tailored to yet not limited by his pianistic strengths. Recommended. **Jed Distler**

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

DEBUSSY IN BLACK AND WHITE

Harriet Smith surveys a rich seam of anniversary Debussy discs that reveals a variety of approaches to his piano music



Mario Häring shows that he has heart as well as a sense of rhythm in Debussy

Debussy's centenary was inevitably going to produce a plethora of pianistic tributes and how pleasurable it has been to immerse myself entirely in his unique sound world. I have to confess that I hadn't previously encountered the set of *Préludes* made by **Friedrich Gulda** in 1969 for the jazz label MPS but it's a good fit, with Gulda once remarking that 'half of all jazz music is indebted to Debussy'. It's a compelling set in which the performances more than make up for a sometimes unflattering recording. Gulda's sheer range of colours and absolute mastery of effect is everywhere evident: his 'Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest' is spine-tingling in its fearlessness, while in 'La cathédrale engloutie' he conjures both a sense of narrative and the most glorious

sonorities. His 'Minstrels' are real slapstick characters; and how tellingly this contrasts with the opening *Prélude* of Book 2, 'Brouillards', which offers a masterclass in subtle pedalling. Other highlights include 'La puerta del vino', its habanera rhythms given with due bite, while the closing 'Feux d'artifice' has a brittle brilliance that reminds us just how modern Debussy can sound.

Talking of jazz, **Hervé Sellin** has recorded a disc entitled 'Claude Debussy: Jazz Impressions'. I'm afraid I have major reservations over this. Not because I'm opposed to the concept of Debussy being jazzified (quite the reverse) but because the results don't convince me. I'm not sure the choice of pieces necessarily helps. The *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune* is a case in point, the sinuously wandering

chromatic line of its original forming the basis of a reworking that sounds merely aimless. *Le petit nègre* would seem a more promising starting point but what follows lacks imagination and an ease of delivery. Sellin finishes with Bix Beiderbecke's *In a Mist* but, again, lacks the effortless genius of that great jazzman.

Mario Häring, playing a warm-toned Bechstein, opens with Book 1 of the *Préludes* and, from the start, his 'Danseuses de Delphes' demonstrates that he is a sensitive artist very much in tune with the composer's psyche. If he's less commanding in terms of drama in 'Le vent' than Gulda and his flaxen-haired maiden is a little too studied, he delights in 'La danse de Puck', which is taken quite fast, Häring emphasising the character's zany unpredictability. The second set of *Images* is similarly vivid, from the sonorous harmonies of 'Cloches à travers' to the glinting brilliance of 'Poissons d'or', here suggestive of the real thing rather than the Japanese lacquer plaque that is said to have inspired the piece. At the climax, however, he holds back momentum rather more than I'd have liked. But Häring's *Children's Corner* has a light touch, from the quiet tenderness of 'Serenade of the Doll', via a plaintive 'Little Shepherd' to a Golliwogg that may be less outlandish than some but clearly possesses heart as well as a piquant sense of rhythm. And Häring's closing piece – the youthful *Rêverie* – is done with subtle half-lights.

Martino Tirimo's 1990s Debussy series was generally enthusiastically received in these pages. But times change and now the competition is much more intense (Bavouzet and the recent Osborne disc to mention just two). This reissue of greatest hits is, slightly quaintly, rendered in English on the CD cover (except for *Clair de lune*): 'The Happy Island' is a good deal less poetic than 'L'isle joyeuse' and Tirimo's reading of it is somewhat laboured in the more virtuoso writing. Of *Estampes*, 'Pagodes' is probably most effective: his evening in Granada is a good deal less sultry than some and the semiquaver figuration of 'Gardens in the Rain' becomes overbearing in places. But *Children's Corner* is more convincing, particularly in the quietly bustling 'Doctor Gradus' and 'The Snow is Dancing', which is rendered with an affecting musical-box-like delicacy. In a similar mould, the First Arabesque has a faded charm and his flaxen-haired girl an unaffected simplicity.

If Gulda's *Préludes* present Debussy as a contemporary figure, the set from the American pianist **Terry Lynn Hudson** put him in a more historical light. She's an artist with plenty of musical sensitivity but the result tends to be too manicured and lacking in atmosphere. The subtle ambiguity of the voicings in 'Voiles', for example, don't really come across, and she has a tendency to put the more outlandish of Debussy's characterisations in quote marks – 'General Lavine' being a case in point, the uproariousness underplayed. The étude-like 'Les tierces alternées' lacks the steely brilliance of the best, while 'Feux d'artifice' has the all excitement of a damp squib. Her 'Clair de lune', though, given as an encore, is finely etched.

Stany David Lasry has rather more of a USP with the use of two Érard pianos in his 1995-96 recordings. The instruments themselves have a transparency which works well and he is an artist who possesses both clarity of thinking and a technique that can encompass Debussy's sometimes unreasonable demands. But he is not the most imaginative of pianists, as witness a somewhat earthbound 'Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest' or his rather stolid fireworks display at the end.

Élodie Vignon, by contrast, is very much in tune with Debussy's idiom and her set of *Études* has many fine things in it, not least an effortlessly streamlined opening number and a poetic and unhurried account of No 2 ('Pour les tierces'). In 'Pour les huit doigts' everything is audible, textures pearlescent, though here I have Pollini's tour de force at the back of my mind. But her 'Degrés chromatiques' is wonderfully balanced. I find her 'Arpèges composés' just too slow and gentle for my taste, while 'Pour les accords' is not as brilliantly bullish as some. She fills out the disc with a fascinating concept – juxtaposing samples of the *Études* with poems by Lucien Noullez, sensitively recited by Clara Inglese. However, they're in French and there is no translation in the booklets, limiting the enjoyment for a wider audience.

Finally, a cycle of Debussy's solo works from **Christopher Devine**. As you'd expect from someone immersed in the music (including a disc dedicated to the ballets and other arrangements), he is very comfortable in the composer's company, though I find the recorded sound overgenerous. He is engaging in the earlier pieces without searching for

depths they don't possess, and pieces such as the *Danse bohémienne* and the Nocturne are all the better for it. This directness of approach works well in the more mature music too (*La plus que lente* has a real unassuming charm). And the *Préludes* are full of subtle thoughts, such as a gentle and poised reading of 'Brouillards' and an unpredictable 'Minstrels', even if his Puck is a slightly underwhelming figure. His *Études* are also finely etched and very polished, with a particularly beautiful account of 'Pour les agréments', while the fiendish repeated notes of the ninth étude worry him not a jot. He adds to this the *Étude retrouvée* realised by Debussy scholar-pianist Roy Howat; also on this fifth disc are such rarities as the *Épigraphes antiques* in their two-hand version and the set closes, touchingly, with *Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur de charbon* ('Evenings lit by glowing coals'; the title is a quote from Baudelaire), a piece rediscovered only this century and apparently written for one of the world's more cultured coal merchants, one Monsieur Tronquin, who kept Debussy and his family in fuel during the impoverished years of the First World War. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Debussy *Préludes* (r1969)

Friedrich Gulda

MPS © 0300973MSW



Debussy 'Jazz Impressions'

Hervé Sellin with Yves Henry

Indésens © INDE107



Debussy '... les Préludes

sont des Images' Mario Häring

Ars Produktion © ARS38 246



Debussy '20 Favourites for Piano'

Martino Tirimo

Alto © ALC1364



Debussy *Préludes. Clair de lune*

Terry Lynn Hudson

MSR Classics © MS1620



Debussy *Piano Works* (r1995-96)

Stany David Lasry

Arcana © A445



Debussy *Études*

Élodie Vignon

Cypres © CYP1678



Debussy *Cpte Solo Piano Works*

Christopher Devine

Piano Classics © PCL10130

'Tanguero'

'Music from South America'

Blázquez Sueño de barrilete **Cordero** Milonga

Dyens Tango en Skai **Fleury** Te vas milonga

Gardel El día que me quieras **Gismonti** Agua y

vinho **Guimarães** Sons de Carrilhões **Lauro**

El Marabino. Valses venezolanos - No 2; No 3

Piazzolla Adios nonino. Chiquilín de Bachín.

Libertango. Milonga del ángel. Oblivion.

Triunfal. Verano porteño **Reis** Se ela perguntar

GM Rodriguez La Cumparsita **Sagreras** Violetas

Villoldo El choclo

Christoph Denoth gtr

Signum © SIGCD538 (70' • DDD)



The tango, which Piazzolla liberated from dance, is both extended and tamed

by the classical guitar. That's partly what the Swiss guitarist Christoph Denoth is getting at when he writes that 'these present recordings aim to express today's broader definition of tango and exploit the acoustic range of the guitar in order to integrate the tango and its untamed beauty into classical music'.

In all these miniatures – some arrangements, some written for the instrument – there are folkloristic echoes amplified by compelling rhythmic variations, extended harmonies and songlike melodies. Somewhere among this seductive sound world, Denoth finds room for his own style by finding pleasure in the play of opposites – especially the tension between European classicism and the folk traditions of South America.

Denoth's recital opens with some of Piazzolla's most widely arranged works, many of which have theatrical origins. The composer's own favourite, *Adios nonino*, so full of subtle changes of mood, sits at the centre of a set which alternates between the urgency of pieces like *Libertango* and *Verano porteño* and those of a more reflective nature, such as *Oblivion* and the exquisite *Milonga del ángel*.

These contrasts are maintained throughout the rest of the programme, with works by other tango legends such as Gardel and those exploring different national styles, like Antonio Lauro with his Venezuelan take on the waltz, and Gismonti's saudade-saturated *Agua y vinho* and Dyens's cheeky 'fake tango' *Tango en Skai*.

There is little here that hasn't been recorded before by the likes of John Williams et al. What makes Denoth's offering a must-have is a musical sensitivity exemplified as much by his curation as by his playing. **William Yeoman**

Roxanna Panufnik

Pwyll ap Siôn delves into the world of the quiet revolutionary who attempts through her music to bring together people and faiths

There's a different kind of revolution taking place in today's contemporary music, and at its heart lies Roxanna Panufnik. Hers is not a radical revolution designed to overhaul the old order completely, à la Schoenberg or Cage. Instead, here is a quiet revolution that utilises music's power to unite people from different cultures, religious backgrounds and political persuasions: a revolution that is more John Lennon than John Cage.

In Panufnik's own words: 'I'm on a mission to shout from the rooftops the beauty of all these different faiths' music. It's about bringing us together. Too often we don't think about what we have in common, but instead about our tiny fraction of difference from each other.'

The importance of music's social and political function was, of course, not lost on Roxanna's father. The well-known, much admired and highly regarded Polish composer Sir Andrzej Panufnik (1914-91) was forced to escape the oppressive post-war climate of his native country in 1954. He arrived in London and some nine years later married author and photographer Camilla Jessel. Roxanna was born in 1968.

She aims to cross cultural and religious boundaries in order to connect the three main monotheistic faiths through music

If Panufnik senior's musical experiences in Communist-controlled Poland were largely negative, Roxanna's aim has been to use music to communicate a message of religious tolerance, harmony and world peace by finding and building musical bridges between faiths.

Brought up in a creative and stimulating musical and artistic environment, Roxanna started improvising at a young age, eventually starting to write out her own compositions at the age of 12. From there, she went on to study composition at the Royal Academy of Music, with the harp as her second study. However, this was not the most propitious time for aspiring young composers. The landscape of contemporary music at the end of the 20th century was marked by ever widening and deepening fissures between tonality and atonality, emotion and intellect, complexity and simplicity, radicalism and conservatism. For composers, such as Panufnik, who were attempting to strike a balance between these opposite extremes there was little room for manoeuvre, and her musical style was criticised for being too naive.

After three years working at the BBC as a researcher, Panufnik was offered a place at the prestigious National



Film and Television School in Beaconsfield. But there she struggled to adapt her own emerging individual voice to the creative restrictions of industry requirements with the obsessive emphasis on technical know-how and attendant pressures on composers to churn out music to specific briefs. She felt a need to remain true to her own musical convictions and the spirit of independence inherited from her father.

Before his death in 1991, Panufnik's father gave her a book of old Polish folk music from the Tatra Mountains. She immediately fell in love with the music's combination of beauty and quirkiness and soon started exploring melodies, modes and rhythms from all corners of the world, sharpening her focus on music's rich ethnographic detail. The first large-scale work to draw on these influences was the *Westminster Mass* (1997), a setting of the *missa brevis* with the addition of Psalm 63 ('Deus, Deus meus'). In this piece – written for treble or soprano solo, double choir and organ (or ensemble) and commissioned by John Studzinski for Westminster Cathedral Choir on the occasion of Cardinal Basil Hume's 75th birthday in May 1998 – Panufnik immersed herself in the forms and orders of the Western liturgy, even spending time on a retreat with the nuns at Stanbrook Abbey in the Malvern Hills. Plainchants and pealing church-bell patterns are heard throughout, absorbed into Panufnik's uniquely identifiable sound world, where jubilant, upbeat passages are contrasted with darker moments. Vivid, shifting tonalities and arching melodic lines give way to animated speechlike rhythms and patterns. Two harps and tubular bells are employed in the ensemble version to impart a bright, ceremonial sheen to the work.

Westminster Mass evidenced Panufnik's innate aptitude for choral writing – an ability to identify with the text and to produce musical lines that follow the natural rhythms and pitches of the spoken word. She naturally gravitates towards words, and points out with typical modesty that



PANUFNIK FACTS

Born April 24, 1968, London. Began composing aged three, imagining she was playing her concertos on her 1/8-size violin

Studies Royal Academy of Music, London (1986-89), with Paul Patterson, Melanie Daiken and Hans Werner Henze; National Film and Television School, Beaconsfield (1992)

Breakthrough work *Westminster Mass* (1997)

Other facts Daughter of Sir Andrzej Panufnik (1914-91) and author-photographer Lady Camilla Panufnik (b1937)

this is because 'half the work is done for you – the rhythms, structures, mood, length – everything is there in the text!'

While it is true that much of her output is vocal, Panufnik has also been successful in the area of instrumental music,

the most obvious example being the violin concerto *Four World Seasons* (2007-11), written with Tasmin Little's brilliant virtuosity and beautiful tone in mind. Panufnik casts the musical net further afield here: an Albanian dance celebrates autumn; perhaps most memorably, a haunting love song from the nomads of eastern Tibet is used for the winter movement, to the accompaniment of a Tibetan singing bowl; pentatonic patterns evoke the cherry blossoms of spring in Japan; and the vibrant heat and rhythmic throb of an Indian summer is evoked.

Four World Seasons provides perhaps the clearest evidence of Panufnik's willingness to travel far and wide to discover an appropriate mood for her music, an idea further explored in the wonderfully evocative *Unending Love* (2017). A setting of a love poem by Rabindranath Tagore for double choir, Carnatic singer, Indian violin, sitar, veena and Indian percussion, *Unending Love* again foregrounds Panufnik's melodic inventiveness, but it is now clothed in more obviously vibrant instrumental colours and textures, producing an effective synthesis. A brilliant recording of the work will appear on the forthcoming 'Celestial Bird' disc on Signum, released in September and previously featured in *Gramophone's* 'For the Record: Studio Focus' (3/18).

Panufnik's open, pluralistic approach ranges across regions and periods and encompasses ancient modes and rhythms, Byzantine and Western chant traditions and church acoustics, the Jewish shofar, Islamic calls to prayer, Spanish Sephardic music, Sufi music, Indian tabla and Greek bouzouki scales. However, her music rarely sounds polystylistic or eclectic, as these influences are always absorbed into a language that's distinctly hers.

Given Panufnik's interest in modes and melodies it may come as a bit of a surprise that the lifeblood of her musical language is harmonic. She has said, 'Harmony is where I start,' but it is there primarily to evoke and

heighten a specific mood or atmosphere: 'I dig around on the piano for a harmony that conjures up the right atmosphere, and from then I will know what should come next in the music.' Tied to this is a particular fondness for stacked major-minor chords (which consist of both the major and minor versions of the same chord heard simultaneously, for example C major and C minor) – a technique inherited from her father – and a highly evolved sense of synaesthesia, where pitches and chords run the entire colour gamut from bright astringent keys in pillar-box red and golden yellow to darker purple-blues and cherry-oak browns, inherited perhaps from her mother's interest in photography.

Overall, Panufnik's aim has been to cross cultural and religious boundaries in order to connect the three main monotheistic faiths (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) – an aesthetics of reconciliation – through music. The next stage in this process is unveiled at this year's Last Night of the Proms in London. Scored for double choir, *Songs of Darkness, Dreams of Light* sets poetry by Isaac Rosenberg and Kahlil Gibran. Panufnik draws on Jewish, Maronite and Sufi traditions to create a work that synthesises all three Abrahamic faiths. And in November there will be yet another premiere: *Faithful Journey – A Mass for Poland*, a joint commission between the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, memorialising this year's centenary of Polish independence by charting the country's chequered history in the 20th century, viewed through the liturgical lens of the Catholic Mass.

Panufnik's quiet revolution is set to continue unabated – crossing borders, fences, walls and oceans, and moving across classes, races and nations. If only all revolutions were carried out in the same spirit of tolerance and inclusivity. **G**

Panufnik's Songs of Darkness, Dreams of Light will be premiered at the Last Night of the BBC Proms on September 8, 2018.

'Celestial Bird' will be reviewed in the next issue

PANUFNIK: RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Typical choral works plus her best-known instrumental piece

**'Angels Sing'**

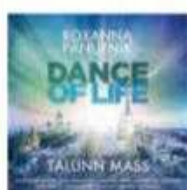
Joyful Company of Singers / Peter Broadbent; Westminster Cathedral Choir / James O'Donnell; City of London Sinfonia
Warner Classics (A/O3)

Featuring the *Westminster Mass* and the equally impressive *Douai missa brevis*, this recording provides an excellent introduction to Panufnik's rich choral style.

**'A Violin for All Seasons'**

BBC SO / Tasmin Little *vn* with David Wright *hpd*
Graham Bradshaw *Tibetan singing bowl*
Chandos (12/16)

Several composers have drawn inspiration from Vivaldi's famous work, including Piazzolla, Leonid Desyatnikov and Max Richter, but few have managed to enrich the concept with such freshness and vitality as Panufnik has, brilliantly interpreted here by Tasmin Little.

**Dance of Life**

Sgrs; Madis Metsamart *perc* Choirs; Tallinn CO / Mihhail Gerts
Warner Classics (2/14)

As noted in *Gramophone's* online feature 'In the Studio: Roxanna Panufnik's Dance of Life', there is a strong sense in which all the musicians enter Panufnik's sound world here, and are comfortable in it.

Vocal



Richard Wigmore enjoys Handel and Vivaldi from Grace Davidson:

'With her clean, precise attack and vivacious rhythmic sense, Davidson excels in joyous innocence' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**



Hugo Shirley on a rewarding disc of Rachmaninov and Sibelius songs:

'Jacques Imbrailo is technically impressive, the voice youthful and focused, virile but with a hint of vulnerability' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 98**

J Anderson

J Anderson My beloved spake^a. Bell Mass^b.

O sing unto the Lord. I saw Eternity. Four American Choruses. Nunc dimittis **Frescobaldi** Il secondo libro di toccate – Toccata quarta^c **Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge / Geoffrey Webber**^corg with ^a**Luke Fitzgerald**, ^b**Michael How** org
Delphian © DCD34202 (62' • DDD • T/t)



Julian Anderson's opera *Thebans* (2013-14), his most elaborate

and ambitious musical statement to date, provides a penetrating analysis of human anxieties and aspirations in a world where gods hold sway. It's impossible not to sense similar qualities distilled on to the smaller canvases of these choral settings of Christian texts. Anderson gives full weight to the sense of wonder that religious beliefs can inspire; placing the five-movement *Bell Mass* and the *Four American Choruses* on gospel hymn texts in the context of four shorter pieces, this programme reverberates with the richly coloured environments of stained glass, peeling bells and soaring architectural symmetry found in the great cathedrals and college chapels. Sung by an outstanding Cambridge choir (with female rather than boys' voices) and sensitively recorded in an Oxford chapel, the result is tremendously rewarding.

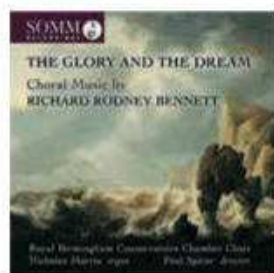
Anderson's distinctive musical way of tempering the untroubled serenity to which true believers aspire is on full display in 'Beautiful valley of Eden', the second of the *Four American Choruses*. Aptly described by Peter Quantrill in his booklet notes as 'a celebration of difference', this demonstrates Anderson's skill at loosening the kind of textural and intonational fixities found in a Byrd motet or a Bach chorale without undermining all sense of coherence in the process. Anxiety and aspiration are inseparable in the modern psyche, and Anderson shows how the upbeat sentiments essential to such texts as the *Nunc dimittis*

(which he sets in Latin rather than the usual English) can be nuanced by a music strong in enriched consonance yet open without incongruity to harmonic and contrapuntal tensions very much of our time. This music is never more arresting than when imaginatively exploiting distinctions between the community – the choir as a collective entity – and individual solo voices, or when evoking bell-like resonance to maximum dramatic effect.

It was a shrewd idea to include one of Frescobaldi's visionary organ toccatas before the *Nunc dimittis*, showing that questing technical explorations not utterly remote from Anderson's own have a long and distinguished history. **Arnold Whittall**

Richard Rodney Bennett

I wonder as I wander. Lullaby Baby. The Sorrows of Mary. Two Madrigals. Remember, O thou man. The Glory and the Dream^a. This Day. A Contemplation Upon Flowers. Madrigal, 'And can the physician'. Time. One Equal Music **Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir / Paul Spicer** with ^a**Nicholas Morris** org
Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0184 (63' • DDD • T)



What an extraordinarily versatile and accomplished figure

was Richard Rodney Bennett (1936-2012). As both performer and composer he possessed richly communicative gifts, and his sizeable output evinces an idiomatic mastery that makes itself felt in every genre, not least choral music. Back in May 2005 I waxed lyrical about a superb collection from The Cambridge Singers under John Rutter (including Bennett's gripping *Sea Change* of 1983) and can now extend just as enthusiastic a welcome to this new Somm anthology.

Every item is receiving its premiere recording, save for *The Glory and the Dream* (2000). Conceived for mixed voices and organ, this 30-minute setting of Wordsworth's 1804 ode 'Intimations

of Immortality' from *Recollections of Early Childhood* strikes me as a riveting achievement, displaying a lofty ambition, emotional scope, fastidious craft and cumulative clout that effortlessly holds the listener in its spell. Gems likewise abound in the remainder of the programme, which showcases with unstinting eloquence Bennett's instinctive sympathy for words from the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages. Of the four carols, *Lullaby Baby* (1986) and *Remember, O thou man* (2010) strike me as especially affecting, and we're also offered three delicious madrigal settings from 1961 (to texts by Ben Jonson and Robin Goodfellow), the exquisite part-song *A Contemplation Upon Flowers* (1999) and a sublime treatment of Giles Fletcher's sonnet 'Time'. That just leaves two settings of John Donne, the arresting vocal fanfare *This Day* (inscribed to Philip Brunelle) and wondrous *One Equal Music* (first performed by the Choir of Hereford Cathedral as part of the 2012 Three Choirs Festival).

Suffice it to say, Paul Spicer secures splendidly disciplined and infectiously fervent results from the 33 young singers that make up the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir (profitably incorporating, I note, 'cock and hen' altos, as on Spicer's many rewarding recordings with his own Finzi Singers). Organist Nicholas Morris contributes in exemplary fashion to *The Glory and the Dream*. What's more, everything has been captured with admirable fidelity by the Somm production team; in fact, all involved with the making of this CD can be very proud of their efforts. **Andrew Achenbach**

Buxtehude

'Abendmusiken'

Befiehl dem Engel, dass er komm, BuxWV10. Gott hilf mir, denn das Wasser geht mir bis an die Seele, BuxWV34. Herzlich Lieb hab ich dich, o Herr, BuxWV41. Jesu, meines Lebens Leben, BuxWV62. Trio Sonatas – BuxWV255; BuxWV267; BuxWV272

Ensemble Masques / Olivier Fortin;
Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier
Alpha © ALPHA287 (85' • DDD • T/t)



Arresting and imaginative: the Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, sing choral works by Julian Anderson



Some Buxtehude discs give us vocal music, some give us instrumental.

This one offers both, a tribute to the Sunday-evening concert series the composer used to give during Advent at the Marienkirche in Lübeck from the late 1660s onwards (and which the 20-year-old Bach appears to have timed his 250-mile walk from Arnstadt to attend). Given the quality of the music-making in Lübeck and the soaring beauty of the venue, they must have been memorable occasions. That and the wonder of the music itself, of course. Seventeenth-century Germany did not lack for church music of rich and noble eloquence but Buxtehude's cantatas added to that a gift for soothing melody, warming harmonies and pragmatic but satisfying formal structures (some in free 'motet' style, some based more or less intricately on chorale melodies) that are not hard to hear echoed in early Bach cantatas such as the *Actus tragicus* and later on in his motets.

This, then, is music of expressive variety and flexibility, ideally suited to the skills of Vox Luminis, whose name on a release these days is enough in itself to spark a tingle of anticipation. They do not disappoint, charting the emotional contours of Buxtehude's music with exquisite understanding and demonstrating their now familiar deep but lucid choral blend, out of which expertly executed solos emerge and return. Not only that, but the whole is illuminated and caressed by solo strings, as in the fearfully trembling 'sonata' that opens *Gott hilf mir* or the Mozart-like undulations that suggest the passing soul in *Herzlich Lieb hab ich dich, o Herr*. These are supplied here by the radiant Ensemble Masques, who also enjoy the limelight in three of Buxtehude's ever-rewarding trio sonatas for typically left-field combinations of 'upper' instruments such as violin and viola da gamba or even gamba and violone.

Perfectly balanced and beautifully recorded, this is another outstanding release from Lionel Meunier and his team. **Lindsay Kemp**

Dvořák

'The Complete Moravian Duets'

Moravian Duets - Op 20 B50; Op 32 B62; Op 38 B69. The Soldier's Life, B62. On our roof, B118

Simona Šaturová *sop* **Markéta Cukrová** *mez*

Petr Nekoranec *ten* **Vojtěch Spurný** *pf*

Supraphon © SU4238-2 (52' • DDD • T/t)



Genuine charm is a rare quality, though this delightful disc possesses it in spades.

It gives us Dvořák's *Moravian Duets* complete, including the 'The Soldier's Life' and 'On our roof', which were not part of the original collections. Written for private performance in the house of the Neff family, for whom Dvořák worked as a piano tutor, they famously put their composer on the musical map when they came to the attention of Brahms, who immediately recommended them to Simrock for publication, albeit in German translation. They are utterly enchanting, and it remains impossible not to be won over by their directness and immediacy, or to be indifferent to

the freshness of Dvořák's melodic invention throughout.

They're shared here between three youngish Czech singers, accompanied by Vojtěch Spurný, who plays Dvořák's own piano, an 1879 Bösendorfer, housed in the Antonín Dvořák Museum in Prague, where the recording was made. Simona Šaturová's silvery soprano and Markéta Cukrová's warm mezzo blend nicely in the Op 32 and Op 38 sets, where the parallel harmonies are pitch perfect and carefully shaded dynamics convey shifting emotions. Dvořák seemingly never intended the duets to be performed in sequence but it's difficult to think of Op 38, where the texts are linked by recurrent imagery, as anything other than a unified work with a defined narrative trajectory, in which love founders in misunderstanding and grief. Op 32 is more varied, even discursive, but again one notices a gradual deepening of intensity as love gives way to uncertainty and the mood darkens.

The Op 20 set was originally written for soprano and tenor (Neff himself, who was clearly talented), though Šaturová and Cukrová divide the soprano parts between them here, which may be inauthentic but proves telling. Petr Nekoranec, very gallant and elegant, is their tenor. The opening 'The Metamorphoses', with Šaturová, is very much a love duet, rapturous and passionate, almost operatic in manner. 'The Poverty', with Cukrová sounding very intense, is moody and sorrowful. Spurný, meanwhile, proves an excellent accompanist, always supportive of the singers, knowing exactly when to hold back and when to assert himself, while Dvořák's Bösendorfer makes a lovely sound, bright and articulate, particularly at the top of the instrument's range. It's an excellent disc, warmly recommended. **Tim Ashley**

Fauré

'Mirages'

La bonne chanson, Op 61. L'horizon chimérique, Op 118. Mirages, Op 113. Poème d'un jour, Op 21

Bettina Smith *mez* **Jan Willem Nelleke** *pf*

LAWO Classics © LWC1146 (49' • DDD • T/t)



Bettina Smith turns to four of Fauré's song-cycles for the latest instalment of her survey of *fin de siècle* mélodies for LAWO. Like its predecessor 'Fêtes galantes' (4/17), this is an uneven disc in several ways. Smith's dark, low mezzo is unusual and striking in this repertoire, and heightens the emotionally ambivalent mood both

of *Mirages* itself and of the early, effusive *Poème d'un jour*. Again, however, one notices intermittent problems at the top of the voice, where the sound can become constricted under pressure, and *pianissimos* are sometimes imperfectly controlled. Moments of effort consequently intrude upon *Poème* and *La bonne chanson*, where the vocal range, though not colossal, is comparatively wide, and she is more suited to the greater introspection of *Mirages* and *L'horizon chimérique*, which keep her for the most part out of her upper registers and allow us to appreciate her soft singing and careful dynamic control.

'Diane, Séléné' from *L'horizon*, cool and hieratic, finds her at her best. *Mirages* impresses without attaining the sensual poise of Marianne Crebassa (Erato, 12/17) or the darker fire of William Dazeley (Signum, 4/18). The cycle brings, however, further problems in its wake, in that there are a couple of verbal lapses, unusual for a singer who clearly takes care with textural enunciation. 'Mirage chinois' replaces 'miracle chinois' in 'Cygne sur l'eau'. More detrimental is 'les yeux' (eyes) for 'les eaux' (waters) in 'Reflets dans l'eau', precisely at the moment when ripples disturb the calm surface of the pond in which Fauré's protagonist is gazing at her reflection.

Jan Willem Nelleke's playing nicely captures the emotional resonance of those troubled waters at this point, which only makes the lapse more awkward. He's a forthright accompanist, weightier in tone than some and quietly intense throughout, if just occasionally short on the poetic subtlety that characterises the finest Fauré interpretations. **Tim Ashley**

Handel

St John Passion. Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder (both attrib Handel)

La Capella Ducale; Musica Fiata / Roland Wilson

CPO © CPO555 173-2 (78' • DDD • T/t)



An anonymous Passion oratorio based on the Gospel of St John survives in Berlin and its aria texts are by the Hamburg poet Christian Heinrich Postel (d1705) – hence conjecture that it probably originated in Hamburg at some point at the turn of the century, set by a capable composer proficient in the suitable style. There has been wishful thinking that this was the young Handel soon after his arrival in Hamburg and on these slender grounds the 19th-century musicologist Friedrich Chrysander included it in his monumental

edition of Handel's complete works.

Roland Wilson's booklet note exaggerates this possibility and plays down convincing scholarly arguments that it was probably written by Reinhard Keiser for Hamburg's Jakobikirche in 1697 (an attribution and scenario that makes much more sense). CPO's cover simply says 'Händel', but inside the booklet the sung texts more sensibly add the caveat of attribution.

The accomplished instrumentalists of Musica Fiata and eight singers of La Capella Ducale vividly exploit a wide range of textures: fruity oboes and bassoon are accorded prominence in several movements (eg the tenor duet 'Welche sind des Heilands Erben?'), two interpolated chorales by Johann Crüger and the final slumber chorus are shaded eloquently, and Wilson's attention to musical details ensures a compelling interpretation. Hans Jörg Mammel declaims the Evangelist's narrative boldly and an assortment of short arias are sung expertly – there are notably fine contributions from Ulrike Hofbauer ('Durch dein Gefängnis', in dialogue with Anette Sichelschmidt's assertive concertante violin) and Wolf Matthias Friedrich ('Erschüttere mit Krachen', a thunderous response to the crowd baying for Christ's Crucifixion).

Similar problems of authorship relate to the chorale cantata *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder*: a manuscript copy (now lost) features a dubious attribution to 'Hendel' but the only sensible deduction is that it was written by a proficient musician in middle Germany in about 1700. Wilson concludes 'The music speaks for itself; appreciate it for what it is, whoever composed it.' Quite so – the inventive setting of six verses of the famous Lutheran hymn tune is performed superbly, replete with juicy organ continuo played on a modern copy of an instrument by Silbermann. **David Vickers**

Handel • Vivaldi

Handel Gloria, HWV *deest*. Salve

regina, HWV241. Silete venti, HWV242

Vivaldi Nulla in mundo pax sincera, RV630

Grace Davidson *sop*

Academy of Ancient Music / Joseph Crouch

Signum © SIGCD537 (76' • DDD • T/t)



Even in this golden age of 'early music' sopranos, Grace Davidson is outstanding for her seraphic purity and evenness of tone. She dispatches her runs – what the 18th century termed 'long



Clarity and delicacy: Grace Davidson sings Handel and Vivaldi with the Academy of Ancient Music

divisions' - with a crystalline clarity, and soars blithely above the stave. With her clean, precise attack and vivacious rhythmic sense, Davidson excels in joyous innocence - in the final 'Alleluja' of *Silete venti* or the 'Laudamus te' of the *Gloria* dubiously attributed to Handel (though the booklet note writer evidently has no doubts). Appealing, too, are her virginal delicacy in Handel's Roman motet *Salve regina* and her graceful, pliant phrasing in the lilting siciliano that opens Vivaldi's *Nulla in mundo pax sincera*.

Directed by cellist Joseph Crouch, the Academy of Ancient Music provide lively, attentive support (though bass lines could sometimes be lighter and more nuanced) and the acoustic of All Hallows', Gospel Oak, has an attractive resonance. Yet - and you probably saw it coming - I found something wanting in Davidson's unerringly elegant, mellifluous singing. Handel probably wrote both *Salve regina* and the exquisite *Silete venti* for star opera singers, with temperaments to match. Davidson, serene and risk-free, keeps them within the confines of the choir stalls. Time and again I longed for more drama, more colour and a more urgent engagement with the sound and sense of the Latin texts (consonants are too often softened).

Compare Davidson with, say, Emma Kirkby's devil-may-care exuberance in the *Gloria*'s closing 'Alleluja' (BIS, 8/01) or with the fiery Simone Kermes in the Vivaldi motet (Archiv, 6/07). And in *Salve regina* Magdalena Kožená, with her greater depth of tone and dramatic flair (Archiv, 2/00), is profoundly moving where Davidson is merely touching.

Comparison can be a cruel game, of course. In many respects this is an enchanting disc. Yet in these dramas of the soul Davidson's poise and ethereal beauty of tone never seem quite enough.

Richard Wigmore

Haydn

Die Schöpfung, HobXXI:2

Nicole Heaston *sop* **Toby Spence** *ten*

Peter Rose *bass* **Houston Symphony Chorus and Orchestra** / **Andrés Orozco-Estrada**

Pentatone (M) ② PTC5186 614 (99') • DDD • T/t



Haydn's vision of a benignly ordered universe is in many ways a no-fail work.

This new version, seemingly recorded at two or more concerts (though the error-

ridden booklet is vague on this), is well played and sung. On its own straightforward, extrovert terms it's enjoyable, up to a point. Yet straightforwardness in *The Creation* will only carry you so far. Compare Andrés Orozco-Estrada with, say, Colin Davis or Bernard Haitink in the opening 'Chaos' and you'll hear the difference between solid competence and a real imaginative engagement with the music's still-shocking strangeness. Here and elsewhere both older conductors are alive to Haydn's evocation of what the 18th century termed 'the sublime'. Orozco-Estrada is more earthbound. The slight rigidity of his beat, allied to a lack of a true *pianissimo* (not entirely the fault of the recording), is confirmed again and again as the work unfolds, whether in the bass's meteorological recitative, No 3, the chorus 'Die Himmel erzählen', whose latter stages never achieve lift-off, or the duet and chorus in Part 3 (titled by Haydn 'Hymn'), where the march foreground is stressed at the expense of the music's hushed awe.

Although they are slightly recessed in the balance - a frequent fault in larger-scale *Creation* recordings - the 100-strong chorus sing with robust vigour. Yet unlike Davis in his similarly scaled live recording, Orozco-

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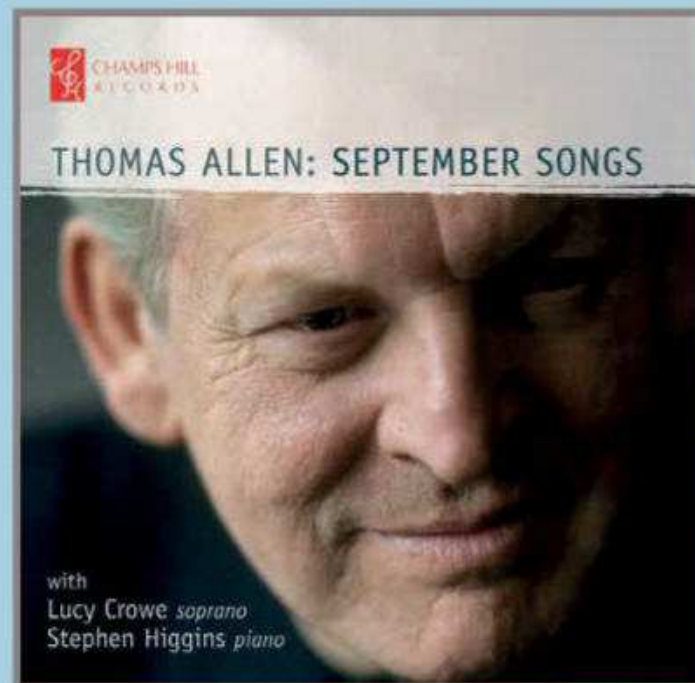
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Estrada fails to whip up the tension at the choral climaxes, not least because brass and timpani are unnecessarily subdued. All the soloists have fine voices, though none match the best of their rivals on disc. The vibrant-toned Nicole Heaston is impressive but too generalised – and word-shy – as Gabriel and Eve. A delicately softened tone, say, in Haydn's ever-delightful depictions of the dove and nightingale, does not seem to lie within her orbit. In fairness, Heaston is hardly helped by Orozco-Estrada's prosaic beat in her two arias.

Peter Rose's resonant Wagnerian bass certainly catches the authority of Raphael. With the deep 'underlay' to his tone, you can predict a sonorous low D on 'Gewürm' long before it happens. But his bluff, no-nonsense style means a lack of mystery in his opening recitative and God's injunction to 'Be fruitful all and multiply', with its shrouded accompaniment for lower strings. In keeping with the whole performance, Toby Spence makes a forthright Uriel, effectively so when putting Hell's Spirits to flight or describing the first created man. Elsewhere, above all in Haydn's depiction of the first woman, I often wished for more lyrical tenderness and a true, 'bound' legato. There are intermittent pleasures here. But I hope I'm not showing national bias if I suggest that for a German-language performance on a similar scale, Colin Davis, with the LSO on glorious form, wins hands down.

Richard Wigmore

Selected comparisons:

LSO, C Davis (9/09) (LSO) LSO0628

Bavarian RSO, Haitink (11/14) (BRKL) 900125

Marenzio

'L'amoroso e crudo stile'

Come inanti de l'alba. Cruda Amarilli. Crudele, acerba, inexorabil morte. Crudel, perché mi fuggi. Dolorosi martir. Due rose fresche. Fuggito è 'l sonno. Liquide perle. Non vidi mai dopo notturna pioggia. Occhi lucenti e belli. O fere stelle. O verdi selve. Qual vive Salamandra. Questa di verd'erbette. Scendi dal paradiso Venere. Senza il mio Sole. Solo e pensoso. Zefiro torna e 'l bel tempo rimena

RossoPorpora / Walter Testolin

Arcana Ⓢ A449 (80' • DDD • T/t)



If Monteverdi was the midwife of the Italian madrigal – ushering it into the new musical world of the Baroque – then Marenzio was its mother. At his early death in 1599 the composer left almost 500 madrigals, published in 23 collections.

The evolving style of these works tells a story not just of personal stylistic growth but also of shifting priorities and fashions in Italian music at the turn of the 17th century.

The number of recordings of his music has recently been swollen by a number of high-profile releases from ensembles including La Venexiana, The Consort of Musicke and Concerto Italiano. While most of them focus on a single collection – a snapshot of a musical moment – the young Italian group RossoPorpora offer a programme spanning nearly 20 years, taking us from the 'fragrant' early madrigals of 1580 to the more introspective complexity and dissonance of those from the 1590s.

The group's tone, set by its bloomy, pastel-coloured sopranos, has absolutely no sharp edges. While this soft-focus approach brings out the 'lightness, transparency and lyricism' that the conductor Walter Testolin identifies in Marenzio's early works in his booklet note, it serves the later less well. So while Venus's descent from heaven in 'Scendi dal paradiso' is deliciously fresh and dewy – a pastoral fantasy of rare beauty – 'cruel, bitter and inexorable' death steals upon the singers in 'Crudele, acerba, inexorabil morte' with a little too much gentleness, transforming a work as startling harmonically as anything Gesualdo ever produced into something too affirmative.

With such a dramatic evolution, perhaps each period of Marenzio is best served by a different ensemble. The chaste asceticism of La Compagnia del Madrigale, challenged in the early books, would come into its own in the Ninth Book of 1599, while Concerto Italiano and La Venexiana's meaty sensuality make sense of the middle-period works, and RossoPorpora's filmy beauty gilds the early madrigals with an irresistible glow. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Monteverdi

Scherzi musicale (Venice, 1607)

L'Esa Ensemble; Baschenis Ensemble /

Sergio Chierici

Tactus Ⓢ TC561309 (64' • DDD)



For Claudio Monteverdi 1607 was a devastating year. February saw the premiere of his first opera, *Orfeo*, and then just six months later his wife Claudia died after a long illness. It may well have been the trials and tribulations of these hard months that caused his brother Giulio Cesare to step forward and assemble the

Scherzi musicali, a sequence of 17 three-voice strophic songs (two by Giulio Cesare himself), together with a final balletto. As the accompanying *Dichiarazione* reveals, Claudio's pieces, which are similar in style to the balletti of his colleague at the court of Mantua Giacomo Gastoldi, were composed some years earlier, after the composer's return from a journey to Flanders.

Despite their apparent simplicity (the term *scherzo* signifies light-hearted courtly entertainments rather than merely 'musical jokes' in the Mozartian sense), Monteverdi provides quite detailed performance instructions. Each strophe is preceded and then followed by an instrumental ritornello (these are also in three parts), and it is this arrangement rather than any specific singing style that is probably meant by the much-debated term *canto alla francese*. The 1607 *Scherzi* (a second set followed in 1632), essentially playful in mood, are scored for two sopranos and bass, and need to be given the light touch which allows the largely syllabic word setting and infectious hemiola rhythms (portents of *Orfeo*) to speak directly.

Fast and furious improvised ornamentation has become the norm in performances of early 17th-century instrumental music, and might even be forgiven in some circumstances, but the lavish and frequently changing instrumentation of the Baschenis Ensemble (it includes, in addition to the two specified violins, flutes, percussion, baroque guitar, theorbo, organ and harpsichord) is reminiscent of an earlier age of interpretation. That, plus the decision not to sing the *Scherzi* with one voice to a part, undermines the simple textures and careful balances of Monteverdi's conception and is ultimately to the detriment of the music's intimate and sensual character. **Iain Fenlon**

Neukomm

Missa solemnus pro Die acclamationis

Johannis VI^a. Requiem and Funeral March^b

^aMarie Camille Vaquié, ^aCamille Poul *sops*

^aGemma Coma-Alabert *mez* ^aDaniel Auchincloss

ten ^aJonathan Gunthorpe *bass* ^bCantaréunion;

^bEnsemble Vocal de l'Océan Indien; ^aNamur Chamber Choir; La Grande Écurie et la Chambre du Roy / Jean-Claude Malgoire

Accent Ⓢ ② ACC24344 (131' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live 2008. From K617 ^aK617212, ^bK617210



Sigismund Neukomm (1778-1858) studied for seven years with

Haydn in Vienna. From 1809 he was based in Paris, albeit with frequent tours to other climes (Italy, England, North Africa). One of his most adventurous trips was a four-year stay in Rio de Janeiro, during a brief period when the imperial court of King John VI of Portugal was based in Brazil. Neukomm's elaborate *Missa sollemnis* (1818) acclaimed the Portuguese sovereign's formal accession to the throne. Jonathan Gunthorpe, clarinets and horns combine to charming effect in a rondò-like setting of 'Laudamus te', whereas 'Adoramus te' exploits the poignant juxtaposition of unaccompanied solo voice ensemble against the full *a cappella* choir. 'Domine Deus' is an extensive aria sung ardently by Daniel Auchincloss that culminates with a rousing Haydnesque chorus. 'Qui tollis' makes solemn use of solo trombone, low strings and choral tenors and basses. The 'Credo' is a grand chorus that runs the gamut from jubilant brassy choral sections to woodwind-adorned passages for the soloists that would not be out of place in Mozart's da Ponte operas; the unexpected introduction of a plaintive cor anglais and then thrilling rasps of brass-laden chords in 'Crucifixus' has more than a whiff to it of the Commendatore scene. The Namur Chamber Choir sing with precision and textural responsiveness, and the orchestral playing is convivial and unforced. This half of the offering is highly recommended.

Neukomm's sombre *Requiem* (Paris, 1838) is set entirely for double choir (much of it male voices only) and accompanied by eight brass instruments (including ophicleide) and organ. The combined singers of Cantaréunion and Ensemble Vocal de l'Océan Indien are woolly around the edges, which makes proceedings uneven and disappointing. Nevertheless, the constituent *Missa pro defunctis*, *Miserere* and Funeral March (the latter played sublimely) demonstrate Neukomm's fluency when working in an utterly different style from the Brazilian *Missa sollemnis*. Both performances are live recordings made in 2008, originally released separately by K617. Their collective reissue is an admirable testament to the late Jean-Claude Malgoire's inquisitive creativity with his pioneering period band La Grande Écurie et la Chambre du Roy. Listeners keen to explore further might want to investigate Malgoire's live Versailles recording of Neukomm's *Requiem à la mémoire de Louis XVI* (Alpha, 2017). **David Vickers**

Nowowiejski

Folk Paintings, Op 18

Polish Radio Choir; Sinfonia Varsovia / Sebastian Perłowski

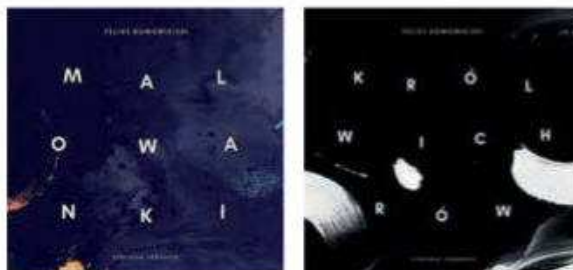
Warner Classics © 9029 56578-9 (51' • DDD)

Nowowiejski

King of the Winds, Op 37

Polish Radio Choir; Sinfonia Varsovia / Sebastian Perłowski

Warner Classics © (two discs for the price of one) 9029 56579-0 (106' • DDD)



Feliks Nowowiejski was a Polish composer, born in Wartenburg (now Barczewo) in East Prussia in 1877. Having studied composition with Max Bruch he went on to become a composition teacher and was choir director at St Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin until moving to Kraków in 1909. His reputation as a composer was established by his oratorio *Quo vadis?*, based on the biblical novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz. Despite returning to Berlin for service in 1914, conducting a military orchestra, his pro-Polish stance in his works and as an orator caused a falling out with Bruch, who instigated a German boycott of Nowowiejski's music, since when his music fell into obscurity.

There are a few recordings out there, most noticeably of *Quo vadis?* and his organ symphonies (he wrote nine of them). Nowowiejski also composed ballets and Warner has stepped up to offer these two new releases of rediscovered scores, both recorded by the Sinfonia Varsovia under Sebastian Perłowski. *Król Wicherów* ('King of the Winds') is a fantasy-ballet set in Poland's Tatra Mountains, premiered in 1929. Leluja and Perłowic are shepherds about to be married but they are thwarted, firstly by a Count who (just as in *Le nozze di Figaro*) tries to assert his *droit de seigneur*, and then by the King of the Winds, who has the hots for the shepherd girl. They are defeated, partly with the aid of a vengeful Queen of the Night, and the ballet includes appearances by an Enchanted Flower, a Forest Demon and a Fire Dragon. The booklet includes a detailed synopsis. At 106 minutes, *Król Wicherów* sometimes feels too long for its material. Nowowiejski's style was rather conservative but it's tuneful and obviously folk-inspired; I'd liken it to Dvořák with a Polish accent. Leitmotifs are repeated a little too often and there are a few choral moments, dispatched resoundingly by the Polish Radio Choir.

The second release contains the opera-ballet *Malowanki ludowe* ('Folk Paintings'), first staged in 1928. There is no real narrative here, merely six tableaux of music for wedding customs of the Kujawy region.

There are plenty of folk dances here, energetically played by the Sinfonia Varsovia. The *obertas* dances in the penultimate tableau are particularly lively, guaranteed to get toes tapping and – traditionally for a Polish wedding – vodka flowing. Perłowski keeps a taut rein over tempos. These ballets may be enough to launch readers into exploring more of Nowowiejski's work. **Mark Pullinger**

Rachmaninov • Sibelius

Rachmaninov Six Songs, Op 4 – No 3, In the silence of the secret night; No 4, Sing not to me, beautiful maiden. Twelve Songs, Op 21 – No 5, Lilacs; No 7, How fair this spot; No 8, On the death of a linnet. Fifteen Songs, Op 26 – No 6, Christ is risen; No 7, To the children. Spring Waters, Op 14 No 11. Letter to KS Stanislavsky
Sibelius Five Christmas Songs, Op 1. Five Songs, Op 37. Six Songs, Op 36 – No 1, Black Roses; No 4, Sigh, sedges, sigh. The North, Op 90 No 1. On a balcony by the sea, Op 38 No 2

Jacques Imbrailo bar Alisdair Hogarth pf
Linn © CKD482 (59' • DDD • T/t)



Making their song debut on Linn records, Jacques Imbrailo and Alisdair Hogarth offer

a deeply satisfying two-part recital. Sibelius takes up the first half, Rachmaninov the second. Each part charts a trajectory towards greater ardency and emotion. With Sibelius, then, we go from the earnest *Five Christmas Songs* to the melodic glories of the *Five Songs* Op 37; with Rachmaninov from the witty 'Letter to KS Stanislavsky' to the passions of 'Sing not to me, beautiful maiden' and 'Spring Waters'.

Imbrailo is an excellent guide throughout. The singing is technically impressive and the voice is youthful and focused, virile but with a constant hint of vulnerability. He comes close to pushing himself too far at the top of the voice, one feels – but never does. He's stern and upstanding in the more sensible early Sibelius and unleashes more and more passion as we get further into the selection. He doesn't quite have the vocal generosity of Tom Krause in the swelling melodies of Op 37, nor can he flood the line as generously as, say, Jamie Barton does in the selection she chose for her debut disc (Delos, 2/17); but this is exciting, heartfelt and moving singing, supported with great warmth by Hogarth at the piano.

Hogarth rises impressively to the challenges of the Rachmaninov too, where Imbrailo is no less fine. Bigger, grander



French singer-songwriter Marion Rampal joins forces with the Manfred Quartet in the beguiling 'Bye Bye Berlin'

(and more Slavic-sounding) voices might remain the preference for some listeners but here, as in the Sibelius, Imbrailo's handsome timbre and focus bring ample rewards – as do the sensitivity, care and intelligence of both performers.

Throw in a generous and engaging booklet note from Andrew Mellor and characteristically high-quality engineering from Linn, and you have a rewarding release. **Hugo Shirley**

Sibelius Five Songs, Op 37 – selected comparison:
Krause, Gage (DECC) 478 8609DC4

'Årstiderne'

'28 Danish Songs'

Songs by **Aagaard, Balslev, Hamburger, Hansen, Harder, Jeppesen, Larsen, Laub, Mortensen, Nielsen, Ring, Rung, Schierbeck, Schultz, Traditional** and **Vejslev**
DR Vocal Ensemble / Bo Holten

OUR Recordings © 8 226911 (68' • DDD • T)

English translations of song texts available from ourrecordings.com



Nordic humility combined with Danish plain speaking to take the country's unique song tradition in a new direction in the first decades of the 20th

century. The organist and composer Thomas Laub was rewriting the country's hymnbook along rigorous anti-Romantic lines and developing a new form of secular song that resonated with the emerging Højskole movement. Laub had an ally in Carl Nielsen, whose desire to move Denmark away from German 'gravy and grease' pervaded community songs as much as symphonies. Plenty of other composers joined in.

Bo Holten's work tending this tradition and its various tributaries has made him something of a national treasure. Here he presents a selection of 28 songs sifted along seasonal lines. A good example of Laub's principles at work in Nielsen's music is found in the ode to the sun 'Hvor sødt i sommer-aftenstunden' (text by Adam Oehlenschläger) with its austere but beautiful harmonies.

Often the songs are homophonic with repeated verses; but as in Nielsen's better-known 'Nu lyser løv i lunde' the Danish National Vocal Ensemble shows how colour can be adjusted to create a journey nonetheless. Just as often there are lightly polyphonic arrangements, as in Hans Hansen's 'For alle de små blomster'. There is more gentle sophistication in Oluf Ring's autumnal 'Sig nærmer tiden', famously covered by Denmark's folk-rock hero Kim Larsen.

This ensemble's lightness of touch and exquisite detail are revealed best in Laub's 'Stille, hjerte, sol går ned' and in the tripping textures of Nielsen's 'Se dig ud en sommerdag', even if the passing chromatic harmonies are sometimes smudged. Plenty here reveals the essence of so much 20th- and 21st-century Danish music; the booklet contains no translations from the Danish text, although English translations are available from the record company's website.

Andrew Mellor

'Bye Bye Berlin'

Berg Sieben Frühe Lieder – Die Nachtigall

Billing (Spoliansky) The Lavender Song

Eisler Hollywooder Liederbuch – No 27, I saw many friends. Nein, Op 61 No 1. Solidaritätslied, Op 27 No 1

Hindemith Ouvertüre zum 'Fliegenden Holländer' **Hollaender** Der Blaue Engel – Falling in love again. A Foreign Affair – Black Market; The Ruins of Berlin **Meyerowitz** The Barrier – Help me Lord **Schulhoff** Cinq Études de Jazz – Chanson. String Quartet No 1 – 4th movt, Andante molto sostenuto **Weill** Das Berliner Requiem – Ballad of a Drowned Girl. Die Dreigroschenoper – Barbar-Song; Die Morität von Mackie Messer. Marie Galante – Youkali. String Quartet – 2nd movt, Langsam und innig
Marion Rampal voc **Manfred Quartet** with **Raphaël Imbert** saxs/bcl
Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2295 (63' • DDD • T/t)



Anyone familiar with the repertoire on this disc will know that it has

been reflected and refracted through many artistic lenses. Nevertheless, French singer-songwriter Marion Rampal manages to offer something different to anything I've heard before. Much of this derives from the unusual nature of her accompaniment, a mixture of string quartet and Raphaël Imbert's raspy, bluesy sax and bass clarinet.

Rampal's own delivery is free, underplaying gritty Weimar-ese in favour of something one moment gently and wistfully Gallic, the next offering something almost wildly expressionistic – she does nothing to hide her accent, and chooses English or German apparently at random. Certainly the result fits in with her apparent aim, gleaned from Rampal's own notes: to underline this music's time and place while also setting it free from that context.

It won't appeal to everyone, though, and the three musical elements often fit uneasily. Rampal's easy vocalising doesn't always blend with the suave, sophisticated Quatuor Manfred. Imbert's own sax solos often spiral off into so much directionless footling – the performance of 'I saw many friends' surely goes too far down this route. The voiceless arrangement of Eisler's 'Solidaritätslied' strangely seems to undermine the whole spirit of the song, too, though Imbert offers a haunting bass clarinet scene-setting at the start of Weill's 'Ballad of a Drowned Girl'.

The sandwiching of Arno Billing/Mischa Spoliansky's proto-Pride 'The Lavender Song' inside Hindemith's brilliantly bad arrangements of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* Overture ('as sight-read by a bad resort band playing at the fountain at seven in the morning) is done, we're told, 'in the spirit of a Dadaist collage'. It's just one moment on this album that left me scratching my head a little, though. Elsewhere, despite Rampal's beguiling contributions, I almost wished we had more just of the Quatuor Manfred, who play their solo numbers and accompaniments exquisitely. A strange, often haunting album, then, but certainly not one for purists. **Hugo Shirley**

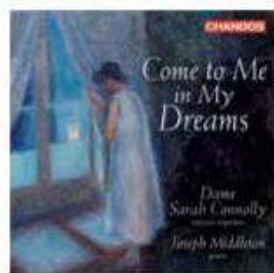
'Come to Me in My Dreams'

'120 Years of Song from the Royal College of Music'

Bridge Come to me in my dreams. Journey's End. Where she lies asleep **Britten** A Charm of

Lullabies, Op 41. A Sweet Lullaby. Somnus, the humble god **R Clarke** The Cloths of Heaven **Dunhill** The Wind Among the Reeds – No 3, The Cloths of Heaven **Gibbs** Sailing Homeward **Gurney** All night under the moon. The fields are full. Thou didst delight my eyes **M Herbert** The Lost Nightingale **Holst** Journey's End, Op 48 No 9 **Howells** Goddess of Night **Ireland** Earth's Call. The Three Ravens **Moeran** Twilight **Parry** English Lyrics, Set 4 – No 4, Weep you no more, sad fountains **Somervell** A Shropshire Lad – No 9, Into my heart an air that kills **Stanford** A soft day, Op 140 No 3 **Tippett** Songs for Ariel **Turnage** Farewell

Dame Sarah Connolly *mez* **Joseph Middleton** *pf* Chandos © CHAN10944 (77 • DDD • T)



A truly lovely programme, this, as generous as it is absorbing, devoted

to songs spanning some 120 years by composers associated with the Royal College of Music. Particularly welcome is the first recording of two numbers that Britten decided not to incorporate into his 1947 *A Charm of Lullabies*. Largely completed in sketch form, both 'A Sweet Lullaby' and 'Somnus, the humble god' required Colin Matthews's editorial expertise and will be included in an appendix when the cycle is next published. The main work itself comes off memorably, as do three glorious offerings by Britten's beloved mentor, Frank Bridge, not least the deeply moving 1925 setting of 'Journey's End'.

Another highlight comprises a marvellous sequence of three songs by Ivor Gurney, and I was also much taken with John Ireland's passionate 'Earth's Call' from 1918 (which exhibits a pantheistic wonder and poetic reach that are genuinely haunting), as well as Arthur Somervell's achingly poignant response to Housman's 'Into my heart an air that kills'. Intriguing, too, that Rebecca Clarke's 1912 setting of Yeats's 'The Cloths of Heaven' should bear a dedication to the tenor Gervase Elwes, who also gave the premiere that same year of Thomas Dunhill's scarcely less bewitching treatment of the same poem (track 4). Elsewhere, favourites such as Parry's 'Weep you no more, sad fountains' (from Set 4 of the *English Lyrics*) and Stanford's 'A soft day' (from his 1913 *Sheaf of Songs from Leinster*) emerge with newly minted freshness, and there's a touching postscript in the shape of Mark-Anthony Turnage's 'Farewell', which towards the close seems to echo 'Full fathom five' from Tippett's *Songs for Ariel* (1962) preceding it here.

Prospective purchasers can rest assured that Sarah Connolly is at her characteristically supple, golden-toned and intelligent best throughout, and she enjoys impeccable support from Joseph Middleton. Chandos's sound and presentation are likewise beyond reproach, and it all adds up to a disc that I have not the slightest doubt will give enormous satisfaction for many moons to come.

Andrew Achenbach

'The House of the Mind'

Bednall Alma redemptoris mater. Ave regina caelorum. O Lord I am not haughty^a **Hadley** My beloved spake^b **Howells** Behold, O God our defender^a. God be in my head. The House of the Mind^a. A Hymn for St Cecilia^b. Like as the hart^b. Regina caeli. Salve regina **Muhly** Like as the hart^c **J Scott** Behold, O God our defender **Stanford** Lighten our darkness^a **Vaughan Williams** The souls of the righteous

Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford / Owen Rees

with ^a**David Bednall**, ^b**Matthew Gibson** *org*

^c**Elizabeth Nurse** *vn* ^c**John Warner** *perc*

Signum © SIGCD491 (66 • DDD • T/t)



Forthright sits well on the Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford. There's

an ingenuous freedom to their tone, sometimes almost a roughness, that might lack the polish of Cambridge rivals Trinity and Clare but which allows just a little more air, youth and humanity into the sound.

Music director Owen Rees cannily harnesses this (or rather, perhaps, refuses to harness it) in repertoire that celebrates that particular quality – repertoire where sincerity and gesture are more important than fastidious detail. Where Rees's superb professional consort Contrapunctus focus on polyphony, with his student singers the emphasis is firmly on 20th- and 21st-century works – works, however, that ignore the more progressive developments in choral music in favour of the tonal, the useable, the nostalgic.

'The House of the Mind' is only the third release in the choir's relatively new collaboration with Signum but it's the one that makes sense of the ensemble's musical narrative. A musical prequel, this collection of British anthems by Vaughan Williams, Howells and Stanford fills out the stylistic back story to the more recent works by David Bednall, James MacMillan, Cecilia McDowall and Gabriel Jackson the choir have already recorded (6/17). The addition of more recent works here –



Generations of British choral works: the Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford, and Owen Rees favour the tonal and the nostalgic in music ranging from Howells to Muhly

more Bednall, John Scott, Nico Muhly – stresses the close kinship between the two generations.

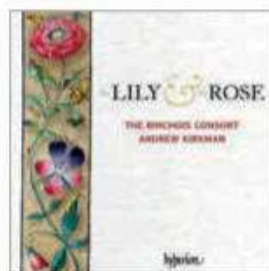
The result is a thoroughly pleasant recording but one where musical particularities are at risk of dissolving into a jewel-coloured wash of competently produced sounds. Only Muhly's *Like as the hart* feels like a change of pace, owing to the cosmetic addition of a solo violin and percussion. Otherwise we're rooted in a modal, chant-infused, John Piper-illustrated world of post-war spirituality that muses and ponders but never really grapples with the knottier questions raised by some of the texts set here – whether Joseph Beaumont's 'The House of the Mind' (set by Howells, and losing a little dramatic impetus through its 10-minute span) or Ursula Vaughan Williams's 'A Hymn for St Cecilia'.

Affirmation is all very well but it needs the spice, the friction of fear and doubt to bring it into focus. **Alexandra Coghlan**

'The Lily & the Rose'

Anonymous Virga Jesse floruit **Bedyngham** Superno nunc emittitur. Sancta Maria, succurre miseris (attrib Frye) **Cooke** Stella celi extirpavit **Damett** Salve porta paradisi

Dunstable Ave maris stella. Gaude virgo salutata/Gaude virgo singularis/Virgo mater comprobaris/Ave gemma celi. Sancta Maria, succurre miseris **Forest** Qualis est dilectus **Fowler** O quam glorifica **Frye** Kyrie 'So ys emprentid'. Missa Flos regalis **Guillaume le Rouge** Stella celi extirpavit/[So ys emprentid] **Plummer** Anna mater matris Christi **The Binchois Consort / Andrew Kirkman** Hyperion © CDA68228 (73' • DDD • T/t)



English visitors to the Musée Cluny in Paris can be surprised to see its massive collection of Nottingham alabaster from the 14th and 15th centuries. Like the English music that was so widely distributed on the continental mainland in the 15th century, it was plainly loved and respected throughout Europe but most traces of it in England were destroyed on the instructions of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Oliver Cromwell. So Andrew Kirkman and Philip Weller obviously had a good idea when they decided to base a CD (and a project) on the similar cases of the two. The accompanying booklet here

is generously decorated with beautiful colour plates of English alabaster (though they are so reduced in the printed booklet that you will need to go to the Hyperion website to see them properly and even to decipher the gushing commentaries on the sculptures).

Thankfully, the scholars have more sense than to draw precise parallels between any particular piece of music and a particular sculpture. And don't be put off by the first page of the notes (almost any paragraph of which could earn a place in 'Pseuds' Corner'). The fact of the matter is that the two repertoires share almost nothing apart from their similar reception histories. But the six adult male singers of The Binchois Consort under Andrew Kirkman perform on a very high qualitative level indeed.

There are two excellent earlier recordings of Frye's Mass *Flos regalis* but The Binchois Consort may well come closer than their predecessors to the true spirit of the work, particularly in terms of personnel and pacing. And if there is occasionally a certain sameness between the tracks, they do jump out at you in a thoroughly spirited performance of John Plummer's evergreen *Anna mater*.

David Fallows

WHAT NEXT?

Do you have a favourite piece of music and want to explore further? Our monthly feature suggests some musical journeys that venture beyond the most familiar works, with some recommended versions. This month, **Mark Pullinger**'s point of departure is ...

Rimsky-Korsakov's Sheherazade (1888)

A concert warhorse but with excellent reason, the symphonic suite *Sheherazade* is a superb work full of oriental spice and Eastern promise. Rimsky-Korsakov served in the Imperial Russian Navy, and the outer movements of this piece – 'The Sea and Sinbad's Ship' and the shipwreck finale – pulse and swell with the experience of one who has spent months at sea. Rimsky-Korsakov didn't want us to get bogged down with the titles he gave to each movement, hoping instead that the listener 'should carry away the impression that it is beyond a doubt an oriental narrative of some numerous and varied fairy-tale wonders'. With its glittering orchestration, *Sheherazade* was the height of Russia's late 19th-century fixation on the exotic.

● **Krebbers** *vn* Concertgebouw Orch / Kondrashin (Philips, 11/80)

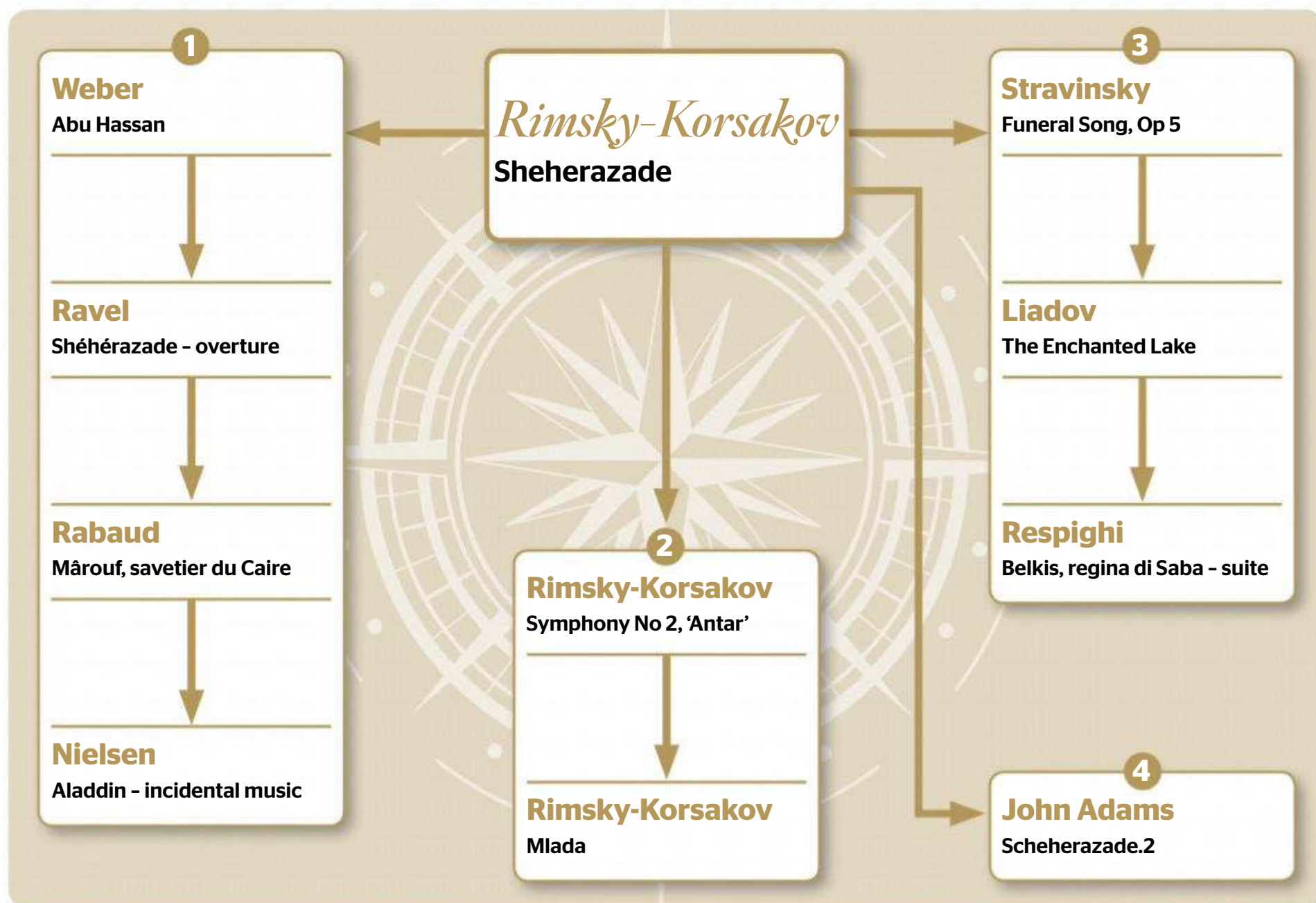
1 *Further tales from the Arabian Nights*

Weber Abu Hassan (1811) A favourite of the Caliph of Baghdad, Abu Hassan – heavily in debt – fakes his own death, from which point things take an even more farcical turn. Weber's Singspiel in one act is not unlike Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in tone, with janissary-type percussion in its festive overture.

● **Cappella Coloniensis / Weil** (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, A/03)

Ravel Shéhérazade - overture (1898) Ravel's song-cycle *Shéhérazade* is a favourite with mezzo-sopranos, but he also wrote an earlier work under the same title which was intended as the overture ('ouverture de féerie') to an opera that never materialised. More's the pity, given the music's wondrously evocative shimmer.

● **Les Siècles / Roth** (Harmonia Mundi, 5/18)





'Sheherazade' (1881) by Hermann Emil Sprenger; the princess narrates her fantastical tales to the Sultan over the course of 1001 nights and in doing so saves her own life

Rabaud Mârrouf, savetier du Caire (1914) Popular in the first half of the 20th century, *Mârrouf* even tasted international success when Monteux conducted it at the Met in 1917. The tale of the cobbler of Cairo rarely gets performed now, but the Opéra Comique has recently presented a fun production. The aria 'A travers le désert' is the hit number.

● 'A travers le désert' – **Alagna** *ten* LPO / Armstrong (DG)

Nielsen Aladdin - incidental music (1919) Nielsen wrote this music to accompany a new production of *Aladdin* at the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen. The adventurous highlight is 'The Marketplace in Isphahan', in which four layered-up melodies create a discordant, chaotic atmosphere. It features in the suite of extracts from Blomstedt.

● Suite – **San Francisco Symphony** / Blomstedt (Decca, 9/91)

2 A Rimsky-Korsakov caravan

Rimsky-Korsakov Symphony No 2, 'Antar' (1868) *Antar* is like a sister work to *Sheherazade*, the composer even changing his description of 'symphony' to 'symphonic suite' in his revisions. Rimsky-Korsakov attaches a fantastical programme involving Antar saving a gazelle from an eagle's clutches, the gazelle turning out to be the Queen of Palmyra, who grants Antar three gifts. It's criminal that this work (which exists in several versions, the earliest from 1868) is so seldom performed or recorded. Ansermet's recording gives no indication of the version used, but it was most probably the one from 1903.

● **Suisse Romande Orchestra** / Ansermet (Decca, 2/55^R)

Rimsky-Korsakov Mlada (1890) The ballet interlude in *Mlada*, entitled 'Night on Mount Triglav', contains some fabulous orchestral writing, as does the later section in Act 3 where Yaromir is shown a vision of Cleopatra. A seductive oriental melody is introduced on E flat clarinet, overflowing with trills and twisting chromatic scales. Writing in his autobiography *My Musical Life*, Rimsky-Korsakov described how the virtuosic playing of panpipes at an Algerian cafe in Paris inspired their use here.

● Sols; USSR State Radio Symphony Chor & Orch / Svetlanov (Melodiya)

3 An inspiring teacher

Stravinsky Funeral Song, Op 5 (1908) 'To orchestrate is to create, and this cannot be taught,' wrote Rimsky-Korsakov in his *Principles of Orchestration*. Yet he influenced a generation of pupils, especially the young Stravinsky, whose *Funeral Song*, recently rediscovered, was composed for a concert in memory of Rimsky-Korsakov. Its noble, solemn tread leads a procession 'filing past the tomb of the master'.

● **Lucerne Festival Orchestra** / Chailly (Decca, 2/18)

Liadov The Enchanted Lake (1909) Expelled for skipping class in 1876, Liadov resumed lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov two years later. He composed very little, but his tone poem *The Enchanted Lake* glistens with an exquisite use of tonal colour worthy of his teacher.

● **Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra** / Litton (BIS, 11/15)

Respighi Belkis, regina di Saba - suite (1934) Edward Greenfield described the suite from Respighi's 1931 ballet based on the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba as 'brazen to the point of vulgarity'. It sounds like a Hollywood score for a Cecil B de Mille biblical epic, with eye-popping orchestral colour.

● **Minnesota Orchestra** / Oue (Reference, 3/02)

4 A modern storyteller

John Adams Scheherazade.2 (2014) Rimsky-Korsakov's leader spins a seductive solo to frame orchestral episodes, whereas Adams's soloist plays throughout his 'dramatic symphony' with barely a pause to draw breath. Adams's piece, inspired by an exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris and contemporary news reports, reflects the oppression and brutality suffered by women today. He claims that it's not a political piece, but *Scheherazade*'s oppressors are described as 'True Believers' and 'Men with Beards', pointing fingers at religious fanaticism. There is no perfumed exoticism here.

● **Josefowicz** *vn* St Louis Symphony / Robertson (Nonesuch)

Available to stream at Qobuz, Apple Music and Spotify

Opera



Tim Ashley on Respighi's once-successful *La campana sommersa*:

'Ravishing textures evoke the natural world, in contrast to the baleful sounds that indicate the invasive presence of humanity' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 107**



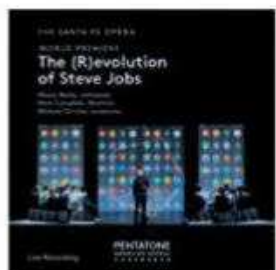
Mark Pullinger hears a Venetian rarity from Wolf-Ferrari:

'This is essentially about four husbands who try to keep their women in line but are constantly thwarted' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 111**

Bates

The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs

Kelly Markgraf *bar* Paul Jobs
Edward Parks *bar* Steve Jobs
Sasha Cooke *mez* Laurene Powell Jobs
Wei Wu *bass* Kōbun Chino Otogawa
Mariya Kaganskaya *mez* Teacher
Garrett Sorenson *ten* Steve Wozniak
Jessica E Jones *sop* Chrisann Brennan
The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra / Michael Christie
 Pentatone Ⓢ ② PTC5186 690 (94' • DDD/DSD)
 Recorded live at Santa Fe opera, July-August 2017
 Includes synopsis and libretto



Mason Bates's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* was premiered in Santa Fe last year.

Setting a libretto by Mark Campbell, it probes the contradictions in Steve Jobs's character, presenting him as a visionary who perceived technology in aesthetic rather than scientific terms, a Buddhist who could, on occasion, be conspicuously lacking in compassion, and as a ruthless perfectionist who alienated many of those closest to him. It's an ambitious work, though there are notable flaws in both dramaturgy and score.

After a prologue set in 1965, during which we see Paul Jobs giving his son Steve a workbench as a birthday present ('It's a fine place to start'), Campbell confines the action to a few days in 2007, during which Jobs, suffering from cancer and in denial about its seriousness, begins to feel unwell during a product launch, before engaging in an imaginary colloquy with his Zen teacher Kōbun, then confronting his wife Laurene, who threatens to put their marriage on the line if he doesn't acknowledge his mortality and essential humanity. Fanning out from this basic narrative, however, are multiple flashbacks and flash-forwards to the rest of Jobs's life and career, which prove problematic. The intention is that the eventual elision of past, present and future should encapsulate the evolution of Jobs's Zen thinking, though it

also results in considerable narrative confusion. Jobs's relationships, meanwhile, with his Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak ('Woz') and his first girlfriend Chrisann Brennan, whom he treated abominably on discovering she was pregnant, are sketched in rather than fully explored.

Bates's score grapples, at times unevenly, with the resulting complexities. Whirring electronics and post-minimalist rhythms convey both the exhilaration of technological discovery and the obsessive-compulsive workings of Jobs's mind, while the drone of Tibetan temple bowls suggests the timeless world of Buddhist contemplation. Jazz riffs accompany Jobs and Woz as they build their first computer, and the opening Prelude of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* threads its way beneath the textures when Jobs draws rapturous comparisons between science and music. This is one of several set-piece arias in the score, of which the best is Laurene's passionate remonstrance with her husband at the work's climax. Woz voices his anger at Jobs's ruthlessness to a step-wise melody reminiscent of Barber's *Adagio*. Chrisann introduces herself with a halting waltz, though Campbell's treatment of her relationship with Jobs gives Bates little opportunity to fully develop her character.

Bates's vocal writing can be taxing, though its challenges are all wonderfully met in the recording, which was made live during the first run. Edward Parks gives a terrific central performance as Jobs, capturing both his charisma and his cruelty in singing that swerves between persuasive elegance and caustic irony. Sasha Cooke makes a sensual, passionate Laurene. Garrett Sorensen is the Heldentenor Woz, Wei Wu the sonorous Kōbun, Jessica E Jones the graceful, appealing Chrisann. Michael Christie conducts with plenty of energy and verve, and the playing and choral singing are exemplary in their precision. The recording itself, superbly balanced, retains the applause. I didn't always share the audience's enthusiasm but it's an impressive achievement nevertheless.

Tim Ashley

Flotow

Martha

Maria Bengtsson *sop* Lady Harriet Durham
Katharina Magiera *contr* Nancy
AJ Glueckert *ten* Lyonel
Björn Bürger *bar* Plumkett
Barnaby Rea *bass* Sir Tristan Mickleford
Franz Mayer *bass-bar* Sheriff
Chorus of Frankfurt Opera; Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra / Sebastian Weigle
 Oehms Ⓢ ② OC972 (122' • DDD)

Recorded live, October 2016

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



It's a strange libretto, like a mixture of Lessing and early French

light opera. Its political correctness – in 'the war of the sexes', as it used to be called – doesn't improve with age. Bored upper-class girls go men-hunting and sell themselves into domestic service in disguise at a fair in quaint old working-class northern England. Cue standby comic tropes: they're aristos so they can't do manual work but the male leads (also hunting on the sly) fall in love with them anyway. Main girl not quite sure of her wooer's background (really so common?) but, abracadabra, he turns out to be an aristo anyway.

All this was based on a French ballet and, at its weaker moments, the piece feels like words fitted to the speech bubbles above pictures. Yet Friedrich von Flotow (1812-83), north German but trained in Paris, manages to make a case for the drama by organising his standard but pleasing musical effects economically and well.

There are fast, quiet choruses setting deliberately nonsense rhymes – much in the spirit of Weber's *Freischütz* peasants or Wagner's *Holländer* spinning girls, who anticipated Flotow's by just four years. There's enough tricky coloratura in Lady Harriet Durham's part to keep the role on a soprano's bucket list – it was on Erna Berger's, Victoria de los Angeles's and



Sensitively respectful: Claus Guth's staging of Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* was seen at Glyndebourne in 2017 – see review on page 106

Anneliese Rothenberger's, and they all recorded it. The tenor, Lyonel, has a distinctive 'hit' number, Act 3's 'Ach so fromm, ach so traut' which, as 'M'appari', helped spawn the Italian version which nearly displaced the German and was a special number for Caruso at the Met.

There's little doubt that this is a spankingly good performance, another success for the investigative repertoire of Bernd Loebe's Oper Frankfurt. To be super-fussy, Weigle's and his players' enthusiasm is occasionally a little heavy-handed – some historically informed early 19th-century lightness wouldn't go amiss. And I don't think we need the over-generous slab of noisy curtain-call applause at the end which bullies our own reaction. But otherwise it's a worthy and exciting release all round.

The cast seems a just mixture of novelty and experience, with Bengtsson's note-spinning both pure and dramatically apt, and Rea managing the non-part of Tristan (the girls' chum but obviously no-hope lover) with aplomb. Glueckert's tenor is both attractive to hear and emotionally comprehensible. The chorus (quite a lot to do for them) have been carefully prepared and balanced and evidently enjoy themselves. Oehms's recording is warm,

clear and natural: if you want to investigate this undemanding listen, I don't think now you need to go any further back in sonic time. **Mike Ashman**

Halévy

La reine de Chypre

Véronique Gens *sop*..... Catarina Cornaro
Cyrille Dubois *ten*..... Gérard de Coucy
Étienne Dupuis *bar*..... Jacques de Lusignan
Éric Huchet *ten*..... Mocénigo
Christophoros Stamboglis *bass*..... Andréa Cornaro
Artavazd Sargsyan *ten*..... Strozzi
Tomislav Lavoie *bass*..... Officer/Herald
Flemish Radio Choir; Paris Chamber Orchestra /
Hervé Niquet

Ediciones Singulares © ② ES1032 (155' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Fromental Halévy (1799–1862): not a name one comes across very often. But he was a key figure,

with Meyerbeer, in the development of Parisian *grand opéra*: pupil of Cherubini, posthumous father-in-law (so to speak) of Bizet, he composed more than 30 operas, of which the most successful was *La Juive* (1835). Nearly seven years later,

on December 22, 1841, came *La reine de Chypre*. Donizetti's *Caterina Cornaro* (1844) covers the same ground and was in fact based on the same libretto. The Caterina of history belonged to a powerful Venetian family with interests in Cyprus. She was married to the French king of Cyprus – who promptly died, almost certainly poisoned by the Venetians; after reigning as a puppet for 15 years she was forced to abdicate, and Cyprus became part of the Venetian empire.

Venice itself is the villain of the opera, embodied in the sinister figure of Mocénigo: he prevents Catarina from marrying Gérard, a French knight, by telling her uncle, Andréa, that the feared Council of Ten requires her to marry the French king, Jacques de Lusignan. The action moves to Cyprus, where – neither man revealing his identity – Lusignan saves Gérard from Mocénigo's assassins. When, at the wedding celebrations, Gérard tries to kill his rival, Lusignan spares his life. Two years later, Gérard turns up from Rhodes as one of the Knights of St John. Mocénigo is arrested and the dying Lusignan rallies before joining Gérard's men in defeating the invading Venetians. The widowed Catarina shows the new king, her infant son, to the people, while Gérard and his fellow knights sail away.

The Palazzetto Bru Zane has done Halévy's reputation an enormous service by presenting this splendidly cast recording in a new edition painstakingly assembled by Volker Tosta. Some passages are probably being heard for the first time; other passages are omitted, including the ballets and, oddly, the chorus of gondoliers described in an accompanying article as 'so popular in its day'. Given that another recording is unlikely to appear for a long time, it's a pity that Bru Zane didn't go the whole hog and add a third CD so that the whole score could be given, variants and all. And what a score! It has almost everything you could wish for: heartfelt airs, passionate duets, powerful ensembles, subtle orchestration. Halévy makes telling use of reminiscence motifs, such as the phrase beginning with four repeated notes to represent Mocénigo and his plotting. 'Almost everything', because the man is a bare-faced thug, not a two-faced schemer like Shuisky in *Boris Godunov* for whom the tenor voice seems entirely appropriate. Éric Huchet does well but it would have been more effective if Halévy had made Mocénigo a sepulchral bass.

Catarina was written for Rosina Stoltz, the mistress of the director of the Opéra. Hers is the first voice we hear, quickly followed by Gérard's. Their duet establishes their love, so soon to be frustrated, the first act ending with Andréa's forbidding the marriage. It's not till the beginning of Act 2, after a creepy entr'acte featuring pizzicato lower strings, solo woodwind and a church bell, that the focus is on Catarina alone. Véronique Gens, in superb voice, is dramatically convincing throughout, as though she were in a staged performance.

Cyrille Dubois is equally magnificent as Gérard, a part written for Gilbert Duprez. His great Scene and Air comes in Act 4, where he prepares to murder Lusignan. Michael Spyres included the latter section in his 'Espoir' recital (Opera Rara, 10/17); here we have the whole thing, top B flat, C and D flat ringing out brilliantly and fearlessly at the end. 'Salut à cette noble France', Gérard's stirring number with Lusignan, goes with a swing, Halévy here tipping his hat to the duet 'Amour sacré de la patrie' in Auber's *La muette de Portici*. Étienne Dupuis, sensitive in the ensuing 'Triste exilé sur la terre étrangère', is touching in his dying farewells. Chorus, orchestra and Hervé Niquet's conducting are exemplary. An absolutely thrilling recording. Now which enterprising company is going to stage this masterpiece? **Richard Lawrence**

Künneke

Herz über Bord

Annika Boos *sop*.....Lilli
Linda Hergarten *sop*.....Gwendolin
Martin Koch *ten*.....Hans
Julian Schulzki *bar*.....Albert
Martin Krasnenko *spkr*.....Captain
WDR Radio Chorus; WDR Funkhaus Orchestra / Wayne Marshall

Capriccio © C5319 (64' • DDD)

Includes synopsis



Operetta composers confronted the jazz age in different ways. Prince Sándor in

Kálmán's *Die Herzogin von Chicago* actually outlaws the Charleston; and by the end of Eduard Künneke's *Herz über Bord*, which premiered in Zurich in 1935, you might sympathise. It's a very perky score indeed. Künneke studied with Max Bruch but cheerfully embraced his own time, and dance rhythms – two-steps, foxtrots and, of course, waltzes – bubble through *Herz über Bord*, though with its saxophones and sizzling cymbals it's not exactly a champagne operetta. Whisky-and-soda, maybe.

Anyway, this is its first full modern recording; and, if you can get past a certain studio-bound ambience, there's plenty to enjoy. As with Cole Porter's near-contemporary *Anything Goes*, much of the action takes place on board a liner, where in order to win an inheritance two attractive young couples (the heroine Lilli is a champion swimmer) try to maintain a pair of more or less pretend relationships before realising where their affections actually belong, and cheerfully swap partners: four hearts in quickstep time.

The score – which includes two entire numbers by the original orchestrator Franz Marszalek – has been reconstructed by Michael Gerihsen, and without having much to go on (highlights were recorded in the 1930s) the orchestrations certainly sound the part. Wayne Marshall conducts briskly, with an agreeably light touch and just enough flexibility to catch the lilt of the more expansive numbers, notably the Act 2 waltz duet 'Wenn das Herz aus spricht'.

The cast sound youthful, which again is as you'd hope: soprano Annika Boos and tenor Martin Koch are sunny without being overly squally as the serious couple, though of the comic pair Julian Schulzki makes for a rather colourless Albert – certainly no match for Linda Hergarten, whose agile, tightly focused voice has the

authentic soubrette sparkle. For reasons that aren't really explained, the intermezzo between Acts 3 and 4 is played at the very end, as a sort of instrumental postlude. It doesn't really come off.

But it doesn't do to over-think *Herz über Bord*. This is a charming addition to the recorded repertoire, performed with affection but presented – as per the infuriating, condescending norm with operetta recordings – without libretto or translations. Non German-speakers will have to content themselves with the tunes, which are delightful, if not quite top-drawer Künneke. For that, listen to his 1921 smash *Der Vetter aus Dingsda* – though don't expect proper annotation there, either. **Richard Bratby**

Mozart

La clemenza di Tito

Richard Croft *ten*.....Tito
Alice Coote *mez*.....Vitellia
Anna Stéphany *mez*.....Sesto
Michèle Losier *mez*.....Annio
Joëlle Harvey *sop*.....Servilia
Clive Bayley *bass*.....Publio

The Glyndebourne Chorus; Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment / Robin Ticciati

Stage director **Claus Guth**

Video director **François Roussillon**

Opus Arte © DVD OA1255D; © Blu-ray OABD7232D
 (138' + 5' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s)

Extra features: 'When Worlds Divide'; Cast Gallery
 Recorded live, August 3, 2017

Includes synopsis



Claus Guth's staging of *La clemenza di Tito* takes place entirely within a split-level set: the private scenes of emotional and

political crises (and therefore almost all arias) are set outdoors in a nature landscape of tall grasses, dirt, rocks and pools, whereas public scenes (including the Romans' choruses) take place up a staircase in a mezzanine-like modernist palace. During the overture a film conveys halcyon memories of Tito and Sesto's childhood friendship (they roam around meadows, play by a river and shoot at objects with catapults), and these images return to haunt the grown men when the emperor has to decide whether or not to execute his best friend for treason. There are very few props, although a handgun being pointed around at length and used for phallic innuendo in Vitellia's 'Deh, se piacer mi vuoi' is a ubiquitous cliché. Most other elements of Guth's production are

sensitively respectful to the core dramatic principles of Tito's dignity, loneliness and conflicts (both personal and political); he is shown to struggle towards Christ-like benevolence in the face of the overwhelming guilt of sinful conspirators.

Richard Croft's mature acting and ardent singing vividly bring to life Tito's torn emotions (he appears as a man so worn by the cares of duty that every nuance of 'Del più sublime soglio' is credible). The cruel manipulation by Alice Coote's psychotic Vitellia of Anna Stéphany's puppyish Sextus is painful to observe, yet their respective trajectories to nobly selfless lover and penitent heroine are etched to perfection. Joëlle Harvey's noble sweetness is the direct prompt of lucid reason and virtuous morality ('S'altro che lagrime') for Vitellia's awakening conscience in 'Non più di fiori' (its basset-horn obbligato played impeccably by Katherine Spencer).

The message of the splendid finale is clumsily subverted: the implication is that all five main characters who exercise or benefit from clemency have been murdered on the orders of the usurper Publio – portrayed by Clive Bayley as a sinister mandarin-like public servant who detests Tito's weakness. It transpires that the heroes are ghosts whose idealised virtues cannot prosper in the real world. Other than the enlightened spirit of Mozart's drama being given an artificially bitter aftertaste, Guth's production is rewarding and insightful. Robin Ticciati's conducting is briskly rhythmical and episodic, and the OAE play with their customary reliability and quality. **David Vickers**

Rameau

Le Temple de la Gloire

Marc Labonnette *bar*..... Envy/Shepherd/High Priest
Philippe-Nicolas Martin *bar*..... Bélus/Warrior
Camille Ortiz *sop*
 Shepherdess/Érigone/Roman Lady
Gabrielle Philiponet *sop*... Arsine/Priestess/Plautine

Chantal Santon-Jeffery *sop*.....
 Lydie/Bacchante/La Gloire
Artavazd Sargsyan *haute-contre*..... Bacchus
Aaron Sheehan *haute-contre*..... Apollon/Trajan
Tonia d'Amelio *sop*..... Fannie
Philharmonia Baroque Chorale and Orchestra /
Nicholas McGegan

Philharmonia Baroque Productions © ② PBP10
 (147' • DDD)

Recorded live at Cal Performances, Zellerbach Hall,
 University of California, Berkeley, April 28-30, 2017
 Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Le Temple de la Gloire is an *opéra-ballet* to a libretto by Voltaire, first performed at Versailles on November 27, 1745. Like *Les fêtes de Polymnie*, staged at the Paris Opéra the previous month, it was a celebration of Louis XV's victory at the battle of Fontenoy. A revised version was staged in 1746; what we have here is a reconstruction of the original, based on a manuscript owned by the University of California at Berkeley, where the recording was made.

In the Prologue, Envy attacks the Temple of Glory, only to be defeated and chained up by forces led by Apollo. Three acts follow. In the first, king Bélus is turned away from the temple on account of his cruelty; the second act sees Bacchus also denied admission. Only the emperor Trajan is rewarded, for his magnanimity in battle; and he asks La Gloire to turn the Temple of Glory into a Temple of Happiness. A downbeat way of honouring a victorious monarch, and it's not surprising that Louis is said to have treated Voltaire with a certain froideur.

The score comprises the usual mixture of solos, choruses and dances. It is not, I would say, vintage Rameau: too many numbers in triple time makes for

monotony. The Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra under Nicholas McGegan play beautifully; the dancers are surprisingly quiet, but there is much applause. Some of the solo singing is, frankly, disappointing. The baritone Marc Labonnette makes little of Envy's opening 'Profonds abîmes de Ténare'. As Bacchus, Artavazd Sargsyan makes brave attempts at top D and C (sounding a semitone lower), but he sounds strained. So does Aaron Sheehan as Apollo; he is in much better voice as Trajan. The sopranos, led by Chantal Santon-Jeffery and Gabrielle Philiponet, are fine.

The printed libretto and translation shows a lack of care: words differ from what is sung, lines are missing. And, even if Envy was performed in drag, the translation shouldn't refer to him as 'she' when the French pronoun is masculine. The booklet includes production photos showing the characters dressed in sumptuous 18th-century costumes: a DVD would have been splendid. **Richard Lawrence**

Respighi

La campana sommersa

Valentina Farcas *sop* Rautendelein
Maria Luigia Borsi *sop* Magda
Agostina Smimero *mez* Old Witch
Martina Bortolotti *sop* First Elf
Francesca Paola Geretto *sop* Second Elf
Olesya Berman Chuprinova *mez* Third Elf
Angelo Villari *ten* Enrico
Thomas Gazheli *bar* Ondino
Filippo Adami *ten* Faun
Dario Russo *bass* Priest
Nicola Ebau *bar* Schoolmaster
Mauro Secci *ten* Barber
Children's Choir of the GP da Palestrina
Conservatory, Cagliari; Chorus and Orchestra of
the Teatro Lirico, Cagliari / Donato Renzetti

Stage director **Pier Francesco Maestrini**

Video director **Tiziano Mancini**

Naxos © **DVD** 2 110571; © **Blu-ray** NBD0072V (140' •
 NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)
 Recorded live, March 30 – April 1, 2016

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Leonard Bernstein's semi-staged *Tristan und Isolde* was performed an act at a time in 1981, and is now issued on DVD



Successful during Respighi's lifetime in both Europe and the United States, *La campana sommersa* was first

performed in Hamburg in 1927. Since the Second World War, however, its outings have been infrequent and its most recent staging, directed by Pier Francesco Maestrini and shared between the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari and the New York City Opera, has provoked differing critical responses as to the opera's worth.

Its source is Gerhart Hauptmann's 1896 play *Die versunkene Glocke*, a Symbolist fairy tale, much indebted to Maeterlinck and Wagner. The Undine legend lurks behind the doomed central relationship between the elf Rautendelein and the bell-maker Heinrich (Enrico in Claudio Guastalla's libretto), though Hauptmann expands his material into an overloaded parable about humanity's desecration of nature and the perilous nature of creativity itself.

The sunken bell of the title is Enrico's masterwork, which has slipped from its trestle before it can be raised or rung and fallen into a lake, wounding its maker in the process. Straying into one of those

mysterious forests with which Symbolist literature abounds, Enrico encounters Rautendelein sitting, like Mélisande, by a well. Falling in love with him, she restores him to health, then becomes the inspiration for his unhinged attempt to build a temple to a new religion that links Christ with Balder (the Teutonic god of light), forcing the spirits of nature, Alberich-like, into slave labour in the process, and eventually driving his neglected wife Magda to suicide. At this point, the sunken bell begins to toll from the depths of the lake, heralding both Enrico's death and the gradual restoration of the natural order, to which the sorrowful Rautendelein returns.

According to Elsa Respighi, the opera's composition, begun in 1925, entailed both 'joyous exaltation and desperate crises', and there can be little doubt that her husband lavished tremendous care on it. Ravishing string and woodwind textures evoke the natural world, in contrast to the baleful sounds, all low strings and growling brass, that indicate the invasive presence of humanity. Rearing ostinatos suggest Enrico's fanaticism, and his bells toll in eerie imitation of their counterparts in *Boris Godunov*. There's some exquisite writing for Rautendelein, a coloratura soprano, and her Rhinemaiden-ish trio of attendant Elves, while Enrico is an

angst-ridden dramatic tenor, not unlike Otello. Beautiful though it is, though, the score fails to rescue the libretto from the symbolic weight under which it repeatedly buckles and the characters remain ciphers with whom it is almost impossible to empathise.

The Cagliari performance arouses mixed feelings, too. There are moments of sinister magic in Maestrini's staging, which makes telling use of video, so that we see Enrico's bell crash spectacularly into the lake and witness Magda's Ophelia-like suicide, which Respighi and Guastalla kept offstage. Under Donato Renzetti, the orchestra sounds gorgeous, though the singing is uneven. Valentina Farcas, her coloratura wonderfully precise, makes an excellent Rautendelein and there are strong performances from Filippo Adami's libidinous Faun, Thomas Ghazeli's reptilian Ondino and Agostina Smimmero as the Witch, who deplores Rautendelein's misguided fondness for mankind. Angelo Villari's Enrico sounds handsome but strays off pitch in moments of anguish, however, while Maria Luigia Borsi's Magda is squally throughout. The accompanying booklet, meanwhile, contains scholarly essays on Respighi's career and the opera's history but doesn't provide a synopsis, which is deeply regrettable. **Tim Ashley**

Wagner

Tristan und Isolde

Peter Hofmann *ten* Tristan
Hans Sotin *bass* Marke
Hildegard Behrens *sop* Isolde
Bernd Weikl *bar* Kurwenal
Heribert Steinbach *ten* Melot
Yvonne Minton *mez* Brangäne
Thomas Moser *ten* Young Sailor
Heinz Zednik *ten* Shepherd
Raimund Grumbach *bar* Steersman
Bavarian Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Leonard Bernstein

Video director **Karlheinz Hundorf**

C Major Entertainment (F) (3) DVD 746208;

(F) Blu-ray 746304 (4h 51' • NTSC • 4:3 • 1080i •

PCM stereo • s)

Recorded live at the Herkulesaal, Munich,

January 13, April 27 & November 10, 1981

Includes synopsis



Leonard Bernstein's seemingly ambivalent fascination with Wagner's *Tristan* had begun as early as the 1950s with

substantial televised excerpts with his New York Philharmonic, Ramón Vinay and Martha Mödl. Printed rumour tipped him to conduct the complete work at either Bayreuth or Vienna in the 1970s but a 'full' version only came once in concert, semi-staged an act at a time in Munich in January, April and November 1981. Bernstein himself and, unpredictably, Karl Böhm were ecstatic about the result; critics' reaction to the first audio-only release (Philips) of the performance was more measured although Alan Blyth for *Gramophone* (10/83) was quite excited.

The now newly released visual side of the event adds little apart from distraction at varying levels. The singers stand on a platform at the back of the orchestra wearing clothes that may be self-chosen costumes or their own early-1980s fashion – hard to tell but, with respect, they look ghastly (Hofmann resembles a rock star trying to chill at a society party). There is no acting as such in terms of moves or props used – and in Act 3 this *Tristan* even resorts tamely to using a score.

But it is a strong cast. It's good to be reminded of Hofmann's big, deep tenor (perhaps more suited to *Tristan* than any contemporary save John Mitchinson), of Hildegard Behrens's passionate use of the text and the sheer colour and accuracy of Yvonne Minton's Brangäne. The last two seem the most able to convey their roles with face and gesture only.

Watching Bernstein – compulsive or annoying, according to taste – does confirm how amazingly well he knows and delivers a score, a majority of which was a personal premiere for him. However, his interpretation, or lack of it, can be frustrating. It seems over-reverential, unpredictably restrained at moments you might have expected this maestro to be at full Mahlerian blast. The lengthy pauses taken in the famous opening (to Act 1) promise a kind of creative intervention by the composer/conductor that sadly doesn't happen. Generally there is no pain in this *Tristan*, little love and few expressive fluctuations of tempo or balance. Act 3, almost a full year after Act 1, is almost Boulezian in its refusal to dig into the most romantic textures. All of which seems a pity given the talents and interest of the conductor and the performance levels of cast and orchestra.

I must end with a plea. Where creative intervention definitely does happen in Bernstein's rare complete Wagner outings is in the still (officially) unreleased concert tapes of the final acts of *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried* which, rumour has it, the Vienna Philharmonic insisted Bernstein lead as a kind of quid pro quo for programming his own music. The casts ended up a little more uneven than for this *Tristan* but you can really hear Bernstein the composer's fascination for Wagner's work in musical theatre. Is there a chance of an official release to mark the conductor's centenary year? **Mike Ashman**

Wagner

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

Franz Hawlata *bass-bar* Hans Sachs
Klaus Florian Vogt *ten* Walther
Michaela Kaune *sop* Eva
Artur Korn *bass* Pogner
Michael Volle *bass* Beckmesser
Norbert Ernst *ten* David
Carola Guber *sop* Magdalene
Bayreuth Festival Chorus and Orchestra / Sebastian Weigle

Opus Arte (B) (4) OACD9031D (4h 28' • DDD)

From DVD OA1041D; Blu-ray OABD7078D (3/11)

Recorded live 2008. Includes synopsis

Wagner

Lohengrin

Klaus Florian Vogt *ten* Lohengrin
Annette Dasch *sop* Elsa
Petra Lang *mez* Ortrud
Jukka Rasilainen *bass-bar* Telramund
Georg Zeppenfeld *bass* King Henry
Samuel Youn *bass-bar* Herald
Stefan Heibach, Willem van der Heyden *tens*
Christian Tschelebiev *bass-bar* **Rainer Zaun** *bass*
 Noblemen

Bayreuth Festival Chorus and Orchestra /

Andris Nelsons

Opus Arte (M) (3) OACD9034D (3h 20' • DDD)

From DVD OA1071D; Blu-ray OABD7103D (10/12)

Recorded live, August 14, 2011

Includes synopsis

Wagner

Tristan und Isolde

Robert Dean Smith *ten* Tristan
Robert Holl *bass* Marke
Irène Theorin *sop* Isolde
Jukka Rasilainen *bar* Kurwenal
Ralf Lukas *ten* Melot
Michelle Breedt *mez* Brangäne
Clemens Bieber *ten* Young Sailor
Arnold Bezuyen *ten* Shepherd
Martin Snell *bar* Steersman
Bayreuth Festival Chorus and Orchestra /

Peter Schneider

Opus Arte (B) (4) OACD9033D (4h 51' • DDD)

From DVD OA1033D; Blu-ray OABD7067D (5/10)

Recorded live, August 9, 2009

Includes synopsis



Post-war 'new' Bayreuth got off to a good start, recording-wise. All of its first 1951 stagings were caught live by either Decca or Columbia and, despite contractual and technical problems, three were released almost immediately. Afterwards came a distinct putting-on of the brakes due to the increasing

number of studio-produced non-live disc rivals and a Wagner family management not over-interested in having on the market official reminders preserved in stone of what they regarded as live experimental theatre work. Companies from the 1960s on have managed nonetheless to cover all the festival's repertoire in (mostly) better sound as well as taking on filmed releases on video, DVD and Blu-ray.

Indeed, the question of which format to use has become an issue today. This is highlighted by the present reissue on CD of five performances (three of them reviewed here), all of which appeared some years ago on DVD. In our contemporary age of easier access to performances via disc, film and stream it cannot be said that the right decisions have always been made about what to put out on film and what to

leave as sound-only. The sight of certain artist names together as a group in one place (or stage) has often tempted companies to issue filmed versions of not wildly exciting stage products. Finances (it costs less!) of course provide another strong encouragement.

So it seemed imaginative and honest of Opus Arte to issue three of the brightest (and most interpretatively challenging) highlights of the Wagner sisters' new New Bayreuth repertoire for home viewing at first. The stage production in each case might be considered (let's be tactful here) as of at least equal interest to the musical results achieved. So we might conclude: wasn't a DVD release enough – a better and right choice for the commercial issue of such a production-orientated venture? The cast all looked good (and acted well) but would you choose actually to hear them now on the gramophone? As Arnold Whittall pointed out in his review of the *Lohengrin* DVD, these artists were wholly subsumed in the 'message' (if you'll excuse a buzzword) of their stage production. This might well present a specialist case in a ferociously competitive market, and one not of especial interest to the general collector.

This argument applies especially here to the *Meistersinger*, the most extreme of these stage productions, where Katharina Wagner intentionally reversed the 'Sachs and Walther good/Beckmesser bad' polarity of Wagner's scripted Act 3. You can't get much of that from the discs alone here except to wonder why Michael Volle's attempt at the prize song is so uncomical or Klaus Florian Vogt's so suave and unfeeling. There are also some carefully placed but non-traditional musical emphases in the 'dances' (which aren't, onstage) and what we might term a general unease of ensemble throughout this part – as a lot of German history is staged in caricature and the music constructively hijacked to fit it. In general this broadcast has not proved conducive to a repeatable listening experience – even if more than a single performance was sourced (and no single date is credited as it is with the other two operas). And no one solo performance cries out aurally 'keep me'. One can see why Walter Legge and Herbert von Karajan – recording the opera for Columbia in 1951 and seeking the slick ensemble they achieved inevitably in the studio – kept wanting to restage what they were watching as well as reseating the orchestra.

The *Lohengrin* is an easier ride as an independent listen. Although controversial

visually (the rats' experiment), the production does not colour the characters' interpretation of their music in a way to make specialist pleading necessary. It remains a pity that this cast could not have retained Jonas Kaufmann's assumption of the title-role; Klaus Florian Vogt can handle some of it according to his (lighter) lights but sounds seriously underpowered in the role's several denunciations. His unrelentingly angelic tone too can make the listener feel short-changed in moments of religious ecstasy. The women are good and the conducting imaginative in its avoidance of bombast. The orchestral strings and Petra Lang conjure up an exciting last stand for Ortrud. There is much of a workable modern *Lohengrin* here.

The *Tristan* is loud, forward and romantic – in many ways everything the (quite wonderful) staging is not. Live commitment is 100 per cent: Dean Smith is not a beautiful voice, Theorin rather stretched, but they work well together. Schneider piles on the pace and the orchestral decibels. It's about as far removed from the spirituality of Furtwängler as you can get, or the varied colours of a Kleiber or Thielemann. This is *Tristan* as beefy heroic opera – no loitering here. **Mike Ashman**


Weinberg

The Passenger

Nadezhda Babintseva *mez* Lisa
Vladimir Chebryak *ten* Walter
Natalia Karlova *sop* Martha
Dmitri Starodubov *bar* Tadeusz
Olga Tenyakova *sop* Katja
Aleksandra Kulikova *mez* Bronka
Ekaterina Neyzhmak *mez* Krystina
Chorus and Orchestra of the Yekaterinburg Opera and Ballet Theatre / Oliver von Dohnányi

Stage director **Thaddeus Strassberger**

Video director **Mariya Klinchina**

Dux ©  DUX8387 (161' • PAL • 16:9 •

DD stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, September 15, 2016

Includes synopsis



This gripping production from Yekaterinburg was the belated Russian stage premiere of Weinberg's most celebrated work, the 'Holocaust' opera *Passazhirka*. Composed half a century ago, the opera's harrowing subject matter – the guilt-ridden reminiscences of Lisa, a former SS guard at Auschwitz, to her diplomat husband, Walter, prompted by the chance sighting

of the former inmate Martha – prohibited any chance of a production under the Soviet regime and its concert premiere was mounted only in 2006. David Pountney's advocacy of this searing score showed that 'this extremely important opera' – as David Fanning judged it, reviewing ArtHaus's reissue of that pioneering 2010 Bregenz Festival production – was an overwhelming theatrical experience, 'a shattering denunciation of barbarism'.

The scenes set in Auschwitz by their very nature make extremely grim viewing but it is a tribute to Weinberg's stage genius (and also his librettist Alexander Medvedev's) that it is so compelling and ultimately uplifting. David Fanning has commented previously on the various controversial aspects of the score, which I will not recycle here, and Pountney's interpretation of the climactic scene, when Martha's fiancée, Tadeusz, plays Bach's Chaconne instead of the boorish commandant's favourite waltz. Weinberg scored it for the orchestral violins but Pountney – as Thaddeus Strassberger also does here – started with a solitary onstage player (the orchestral section takes it up later). Does this amount to 'trivialising one of the most highly charged scenes in all opera'? I did not find it so when seeing it at ENO in 2011, nor the Neos/ArtHaus DVD, and again not here; the focus on the individual is all the more acute when facing the jackboot.

Strassberger's production stands up well on its own terms, though I would have liked more light in the scenes set on the liner: it looks very dark throughout. The orchestra are well marshalled by Oliver von Dohnányi (whose discography rarely extends later than Johann Strauss), though occasionally their limitations are exposed, as in the scrappy interlude before Act 2 scene 2, 'Workshop'; the Vienna Symphony Orchestra are markedly superior. The Russian honours go to the singers, especially Nadezhda Babintseva as Lisa and Natalia Karlova as Martha (as moving if not so radiant as Elena Kelessidi on Neos/ArtHaus). The tenderness and stillness of the ensemble at the heart of Act 2 is almost too much to bear, especially given what follows. Recorded for TV broadcast, the video direction is straightforward but effective. The subtitles and minimal synopsis are available in English, Polish and Russian only. A highly commendable issue: with fascism on the march again in central Europe, and offshoots sprouting obscenely from North America to Russia, Weinberg's opera is increasingly relevant. As Krzysztof Olendzki, director of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute in Poland, writes in the booklet:



The Four Old Gits: Wolf-Ferrari's comic opera *I quattro rusteghi* has a garrulous plot where the women outwit the men

'*The Passenger* is a shocking work. It is a guardian of memory, which should be cultivated by all.' **Guy Rickards**

Comparative version:

Currentzis (2/16) (ARTH) DVD 109 079; Blu-ray 109 080

Wolf-Ferrari

I quattro rusteghi

Mihnea Lamatic *bass*.....Lunardo
Silvia Beltrami *mez*.....Margarita
Romina Casucci *sop*.....Lucieta
Mirko Quarello *bass*.....Simone
Daniela Degennaro *sop*.....Marina
Aleksandar Stefanoski *bass*.....Maurizio
Tansel Akzeybek *ten*.....Filipeto
Roman Ialcic *bass*.....Cancian
Ana James *sop*.....Felice
Giulio Pelligra *ten*.....Conte Riccardo
Agnieszka Hauzer *sop*.....Servant

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /

Vasily Petrenko

Rubicon ® ② RCD1024 (131' • DDD)

Recorded live, March 2012

Libretto available from rubiconclassics.com



How good is your Venetian dialect? Reissuing an opera like Verdi's *Falstaff* without a libretto printed in the booklet is just about excusable. Listeners may have a

smattering of Italian, or are likely to know the opera or will have an alternative version with a libretto to hand. But issuing a rarity such as Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's *I quattro rusteghi* – sung in Venetian dialect, if you will – without a libretto is extremely poor form, especially when you follow directions to Rubicon's website to access the text only to discover that there are three files: one in Italian (Venetian), printed in 1981 and poorly scanned, with two in English which don't even match the layout of the Italian text. So even if you can be bothered to open two windows side by side on your computer while you listen, you have to scroll through both at different rates to try and keep up with the garrulous plot. It grated my patience wafer thin.

Based on a play by Carlo Goldoni (as were several of Wolf-Ferrari's operas), *I quattro rusteghi* is a farce. Translated as 'The Four Curmudgeons' – or 'The Four Old Gits', to use modern slang – it's essentially about four husbands who try to keep their women in line but are constantly outwitted to make sure that young love triumphs. The plot has shades of *Falstaff* but the music is a pale shadow of that autumnal Verdian masterpiece.

Gerald Larner claims in his booklet note that Wolf-Ferrari anticipated Stravinsky's neoclassicism here but I beg to disagree.

It sounds more like an *opera buffa* pastiche, conversational in style and without any great set pieces, although *Lucieta* has a pretty aria in Act 2 (disc 2, track 2). It's fairly standard Wolf-Ferrari, I'm afraid, not unlike the tedious *Le donne curiose* (also in Venetian dialect).

Conducting the RLPO in staged concert performances from 2012, Vasily Petrenko goes full out on Italian charm. This was a project by the European Opera Centre and the many soloists – spanning the continent – are all young and committed. Mihnea Lamatic is suitably grumpy as the antique dealer Lunardo, trying to honour local custom by not allowing his daughter to see her bridegroom ahead of her wedding. Romina Casucci's pert soprano makes for an engaging *Lucieta*. For collectors of unusual ensembles, there is a bass trio in Act 3 (disc 2, track 10).

The only competition comes on a crumbly live recording from Turin, conducted by Ettore Gracis (1969). To be curmudgeonly, this new recording understandably sounds fresher; but this is no neglected operatic gem. Ironically, it was Wolf-Ferrari's single attempt at *verismo* that provided his greatest work: *I gioielli della Madonna* ('The Jewels of the Madonna'). **Mark Pullinger**

Selected comparison:

Gracis (OPDO) OPD1385

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The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

Jazz

Brought to you by **jazzwise**

Nicole Mitchell

Maroon Cloud

FPE © FPE 20



Flautist-composer Mitchell again here proves that her breadth of artistic vision, as well as command of her instrument and ability to harness strong personalities without constraining them, can produce outstanding results. With its dual reference to both a meditative state that can be achieved by extreme focus as well as runaway slaves who fought colonial masters in the Caribbean (Jamaican maroons), the music is marked by a tender contemplativeness as well as muscular momentum which makes the absence of a percussion instrument anything but a problem. One of Mitchell's great sources of inspiration, James Newton, made excellent recordings with cellist

Abdul Wadud and pianist Anthony Davis, and there are passing echoes of that vocabulary, yet the additional element that Mitchell has in her line-up, New York-based Trinidad-descended vocalist Fay Victor, is decisive, to say the least. Her distinctive, commanding tone, stealthy phrasing and seamless transitions from singing to spoken word contribute to the overall sense of fluidity in the music, where strong melody can open out into thrilling collective improvisation. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Szun Waves

New Hymn To Freedom

The Leaf Label © BAY 111



Szun Waves brings together Norfolk-based electronica artist Luke Abbott; Laurence Pike, of Australian electronic jazz

trio Triosk; and saxophonist Jack Wyllie of Mercury-nominated UK group Portico Quartet. *New Hymn To Freedom* is their second release and it's an album to lose yourself in. Across six live improvisations, the trio create psychedelic nebulas of sound – ambient expanses scribbled with plaintive sax melodies and carried along by drumbeats that pad and thrash, as Abbott's synths wobble and fizz and shimmer and fly like streamers. Sometimes these tracks evoke the Buchla synth experiments of Suzanne Ciani. The trio also reference UK producer Four Tet and Alice Coltrane, whose influence can perhaps be heard in some of the harmonies, which have an Indian classical flavour. The haunting, 12-minute title-track is especially engrossing. It builds from a sparse opening, layering drones, warped overtones and shrill soprano sax and gradually ramping-up the tension before melting away. It leaves you wanting more. **Thomas Rees**

World Music

Brought to you by **SONGLINES**

Dreamers' Circus

Rooftop Sessions

GO' Danish Folk/Vertical Records © VERTCD112



The piano keys fall like drops of water, the violin soars like a gull over Øresund, while the delicate pluck of the cittern string is like a bright spark on the water. This is ethereal modern Nordic folk music that almost washes into modern classical, with a soundscape that is expansive and mesmerising. *Rooftop Sessions* is the third album from the Danish trio Dreamers' Circus, but the first to be distributed outside Denmark. It offers an exciting glimpse of these talented multi-instrumentalists. Nikolaj Busk plays spellbinding grand piano, alongside instruments including accordion, synthesizers and a spinet (a small harpsichord). Rune Tonsgaard Sørensen

plays effortless violin, plus spots on vibraphone and Farfisa organ. String player Ale Carr's axes include a cittern, double bass and even a kokle (a Latvian zither related to the Finnish kantele). The album is entirely instrumental and runs to a restrained 40 minutes, but it is a breath of musical fresh air, carrying all the simplicity and attention to clarity that defines so much Danish creativity. **Nathaniel Handy**

Gurumul

Djarimirri: Child of the Rainbow

Skinnyfish/MVKA © SFGU180413



The 2017 death of Aboriginal musician Geoffrey Gurumul Yunupingu at the age of 46 was a loss felt not only in Australia, but around the world. With his angelic voice the blind vocalist's

contribution to world music was profound. Thankfully, Dr G left behind one final musical statement, a glorious masterpiece that brings together traditional Yolngu songs from his Elcho Island home – off the Arnhem Land coast – with modern Western orchestral arrangements, reminiscent of Philip Glass, Steve Reich and Michael Nyman. Completed just before his death, *Djarimirri*'s four-year creation was lovingly overseen by Gurumul's longtime producer, bassist and manager Michael Hohnen, with orchestrations arranged by collaborator and composer Erkki Veltheim. Somewhat of a departure from his usual stripped-back setting of guitar-bass-vocals, the occasionally epic backings of *Djarimirri* are handled sensitively, with Dr G's remarkable vocals weaving through the orchestral themes. It's a fitting tribute to Gurumul's legacy that his final studio album is just as groundbreaking as his solo debut. **Seth Jordan**

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REISSUES & ARCHIVE

Our monthly guide to the most exciting catalogue releases, historic issues and box-sets

BOX-SET ROUND-UP PAGE 117

ROB COWAN'S REPLAY PAGE 118

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED PAGE 120

‘Mein Gott und Richter’

Karl Richter's DG Bach recordings stand alone, writes **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood**

Such was his pedigree – steeped in the Lutheran faith of a pastor father and becoming organist at St Thomas's, Leipzig, aged 21 – that Karl Richter's dominating position in modern post-war Bach performance remained virtually unquestioned, globally, until the tide of authenticity quickly turned him into an anachronism. Yet for many collectors of his evolving series of 75 cantatas for DG's Archiv label (which started hesitantly in the late 1950s and continued until 1979, allowing him to record a cantata for every Sunday and Feast Day in the year) Karl Richter imparts, as Nicholas Anderson distils beautifully in his note, 'an intuitive feeling for the nobility of the music, warmth of sentiment and a distinctive expressive fervour with a supple inner strength'. His death in 1981, at the age of only 54, left him as a flawed icon. 'Mein Gott und Richter', the text from the opening recitative of No 33, seems particularly fitting to a generation for whom Bach, God and Richter were inextricably linked – especially when declaimed with such typically unerring conviction by one of Richter's distinguished stalwarts, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.

Enough time had passed when the first CD releases appeared in 1994 (in a plush five-volume box of 26 discs) to encourage reappraisal of Richter's legacy. This was during a second phase of 'authenticity' zeal, and it was the older work – up to the late 1960s – which ironically afforded the most energised and palatable performances to late-20th-century ears. The conductor's final period was often marked by a gradual erosion of his greatest compulsions: unremitting focus of expressive intensity and belief.

This new exceptionally presented 24-bit Blu-ray release (selling for about £45) is a salutary reminder of how technology can help us to re-engage with our recorded heritage, and Richter has gradually become part of our heritage, albeit not in quite the



Karl Richter: a major post-war Bach interpreter

way his mentors have – Karl Straube, Günther Ramin and Rudolf Mauersberger. As luck had it, the DG modern pre-digital 'house style' suited Richter's ripe textural palette, especially the way his Munich Bach Orchestra's integrated string sound blended so well with the rigorously open-vowel projection of his famous choir. Indeed, many Richterian characteristics remain unaffected by the new medium: the approach is, admittedly, rarely 'light'; and when it attempts to be it tends towards a vocabulary of detached articulation, at times almost in a kind of self-reflecting neoclassicism (such is the exultant but geometric opening chorus of No 45).

Rigidity of phraseology is ultimately an Achilles heel which prevents Richter's Bach from offering consistent satisfaction, along with whether his loyal star-singers are either arrested by Richter's vision or become suffocated by it; they may not always have realised which, as Richter was clearly a hypnotic collaborator, judging by

the testaments of Janet Baker, Sheila Armstrong, Peter Schreier and Fischer-Dieskau. We find ourselves regularly in thrall to 'scenas' of exceptional artistry and timeless distinction, and they don't necessarily fall into liturgical patterns – although some might argue that the Advent, Christmas and early Trinity works fare best. Personal favourites, such as Nos 1, 8, 9, 21, 26, 34, 45, 60, 63, 67 (though not as good as his earlier reading on Telefunken), 81, 104, 108, 111 and 124, carry the sense that a world without this music is simply inconceivable.

This is why Richter (in Blu-ray) helps us to redefine the landscape. The depth of the sonic experience provides a curious leavening of the stodgier movements. No 76 always sounded laboured on LP and CD; it now springs up with inner life, liveness and fantasy – that fugue subject becomes less doggedly overbearing. Likewise, it can also exacerbate the peccadillos such as Fischer-Dieskau's tendency to a kind of didactic self-parody or Edith Mathis's supreme technical apparatus but regularly accompanied by an unvarying cut-glass timbre. Anna Reynolds, on the other hand, is almost always radiant and the new format reaffirms her place as one of the great Bachians from any age. How many other Wagnerians can say that? Peter Schreier is a curate's egg, blindingly brilliant in conveying imagery without a scintilla of vulnerability and then, at once, unable to be vulnerable when Bach demands it. All in all, it's a roster of unrivalled Bach singing of its kind.

One of the greatest triumphs of this new release is how the instrumental excellence of Richter's ensemble shines through. You can hear the depth of the viola sound in dialogue, as you would expect in a state-of-the-art 'period' ensemble, and the woodwind obbligato solos are gloriously positioned as co-protagonists, in quite an innovative perspective. Aurèle Nicolet,

Manfred Clement, Maurice André et al are exceptional contributors but I always hanker after oboist Edgar Shann, above all, for playing that never fails to move.

Then there are thrilling, visceral choruses of a kind we rarely hear in Bach cantata recordings before Sir John Eliot Gardiner. In fact, the similarities between these two great Bachians are oddly striking: each profoundly regards Bach as the centrifugal force of their musical being, as well as demanding a collective response from performers which is born of a clear,

singular vision. Yet Gardiner, in a rare blind spot in his exceptionally rich and astute study *Music in the Castle of Heaven* (Allen Lane: 2013), confuses Richter's 'muscularity' (and by implication his tradition) with a 'lack of spirit, humour and humanity'. Spirit and humour come in various shapes and sizes and, on the basis of many performances here, humanity is essentially what will forever keep Richter as a primary figure in Bach performance history. Although firmly of its age with its inevitable solecisms and redundant


exigencies, that 'age' in Richter's hands (and note his fine organ-playing in the same breath) bestowed a wellspring of inspiration, providing yardsticks of sheer brilliance beyond taste and fashion. The Blu-ray experience simply strengthens and confirms that Richter isn't going away. **G**

THE RECORDING,

JS Bach 75 Cantatas

Sols; Munich Bach Choir and Orch /

Karl Richter

Archiv Produktion © ②  483 5037AM2

A clutch of curate's eggs

Jeremy Nicholas welcomes back some classic Gilbert & Sullivan recordings from Decca

This is the first time Decca has issued its 1954 **Princess Ida** on CD (Naxos put it out in 2006 with highlights from *The Gondoliers*). It is still, arguably, the best version, though the 1924 and 1932 accounts (both featuring the great Henry Lytton) have their admirers, and is much to be preferred to Malcolm Sargent's 1965 account with its sometimes bafflingly inert tempos. With its Mendelssohnian touches and parodies of Handel, *Princess Ida* is a delightful score – especially Act 2 – despite the lack of big 'Take a pair of sparkling eyes'-type hits.

The 1954 recording has the benefit of Isidore Godfrey on the podium. A friend of mine who played under him said you could set your watch by his time-keeping – the same every performance but always fresh, alive, spontaneous. It has a vintage collection of experienced D'Oyly Carte hands, not the least of whom is Peter Pratt as King Gama, who takes his cue from Tennyson's *The Princess*, on which Gilbert's libretto is based: 'crack'd and small his voice ... a little dry old man, without a star, not like a king'. Among the other men are Donald Adams, the mellifluous Thomas Round, Leonard Osborn and Jeffrey Skitch; the women include Muriel Harding, Beryl Dixon (superb) and Ann Drummond-Grant. They are let down, however, by Victoria Sladen in the title-role. Shipped in for this one recording, her voice is dismayingly unalluring, like pouring milk on your breakfast cereal and then discovering, with your first mouthful, that the milk has gone off.

The filler for the disc is the reissue of a 1965 stereo LP called **Gilbert and Sullivan Spectacular**, an arbitrary collection of bits and bobs with the RPO under Sargent. It's a real curate's egg, with the under-valued Alan Styler and Valerie Masterson in

extracts from *Pinafore* and others, and Donald Adams giving his Mikado (with blood-curdling laugh) and Sergeant (misspelt in the track-listing, which also assigns Ko-Ko to a bass instead of baritone). But there is also John Reed hamming it up in the most irritating manner as the modern Major General and Ko-Ko. The recording producer for both these albums was James Walker. He was also the D'Oyly Carte chorusmaster for the Sargent recording. In 1968 he succeeded Godfrey as D'Oyly Carte's music director and in 1971 conducted **HMS Pinafore**, his only complete opera recording in that role before returning to producing shortly afterwards. It is another curate's egg. The chorus is superb, the RPO is crisp and alert and the cast is top-drawer D'Oyly Carte: Ralph Mason and Valerie Masterson are outstanding as the two lovers and John Reed manages not to overplay the comedy as Sir Joseph. But the drawbacks are severe. First, there's all the dialogue: let's just say that most of these artists were cast for their singing rather than acting ability. Then there are the seaside and nautical sound effects: you will quickly tire of the wretched seagulls. Most distracting of all is the constant wildly varying balance between orchestra, chorus and soloists as the producers play around with the novelty of Decca's Phase 4 Stereo.

Though giving your reviewer his first and only G&S stage role (a schoolboy Dr Daly), **The Sorcerer** is not G&S's best work. It was only their second (first full-length) collaboration and they had not yet hit their stride as they would the following year (1878) with *Pinafore*. When Decca recorded it in 1953, the piece had not been performed by the D'Oyly Carte company for 14 years – and not frequently before

that. It takes an age to get off the ground. A strong cast includes the delightful Yvonne Dean as Constance, Beryl Dixon and Muriel Harding, complemented by Neville Griffiths as Alexis and Peter Pratt as John Wellington Wells. Disc 2 is made up of five numbers from **Utopia Limited**, originally recorded as a filler for Decca's 1964 *Trial by Jury*. Godfrey, the RPO, Adams, Reed, Round and Kenneth Sandford do the honours; but, given the choice, I'd go for the complete work in Decca's excellent 1975 recording conducted by Royston Nash.

The Naxos reissue of this 1953 Decca *Sorcerer*, by contrast, uses as its filler the highlights from an abridged recording of the work made in 1933, the D'Oyly Carte era of Darrell Fancourt, Derek Oldham and George Baker (it was also Godfrey's first G&S recording). What makes the Naxos discs mentioned above even more attractive is that, though all these Decca Eloquence releases come with excellent booklets by Graham Rogers, Naxos's annotations are far better and come with synopses of the operettas into which are inserted the track numbers, allowing one to follow the action while identifying who is singing what at any time. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Princess Ida. Gilbert & Sullivan Spectacular

D'Oyly Carte Opera Company; New SO /

Isidore Godfrey; RPO / Sir Malcolm Sargent

Decca Eloquence © ② 482 5349

HMS Pinafore D'Oyly Carte Opera Company;

RPO / James Walker

Decca Eloquence © ② 482 5357

The Sorcerer. Utopia Limited - excs

Nat D'Oyly Carte Opera Company;

Orchestra of the Royal Opera House,

Covent Garden / Isidore Godfrey

Decca Eloquence © ② 482 5363

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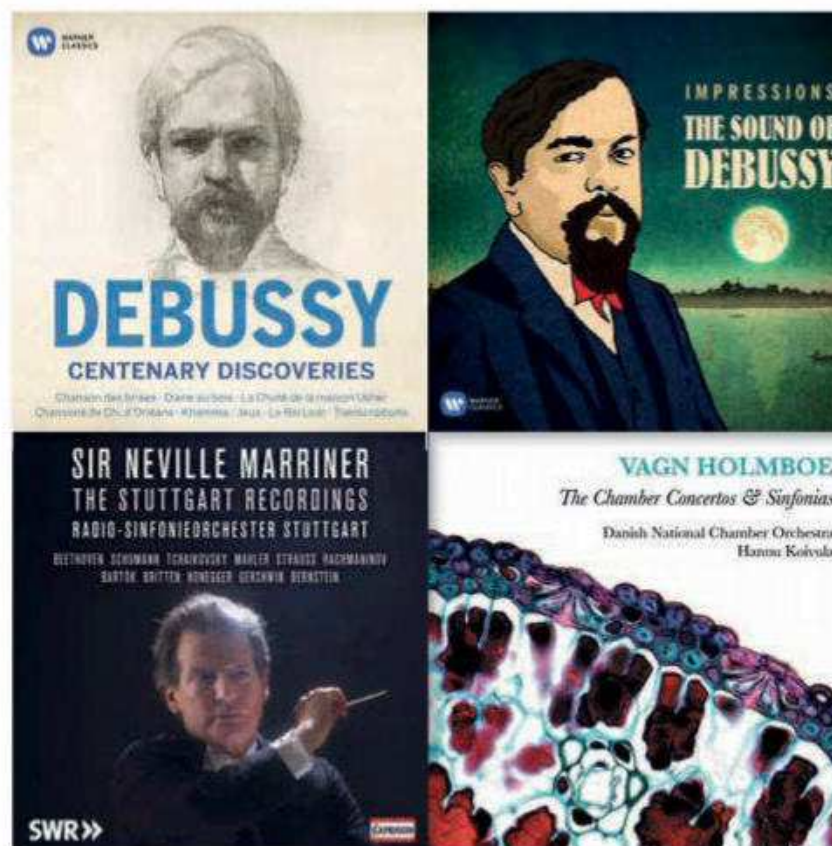
BOX-SET *Round-up*

Rob Cowan recommends a personal selection of some worthwhile CD bargains

When reviewing the Warner and DG Debussy boxes in our April issue, I summed up the situation by saying that DG's set was admirably comprehensive when taken on its own terms, more perhaps for the general collector who wants to avoid a dazzling array of esoterica, which is provided by Warner. So I'm happy to report that Warner has taken the sensible initiative of packing nearly three hours' worth of that 'esoterica' into a **Centenary Discoveries** box, which includes many first recordings, not least Debussy's original piano score of *Jeux*, a real ear-opener when it comes to tracing the music's complex design. Such significant vocal works as *Diane au bois*, *La chute de la maison Usher* (fragments from the original edition), *Chanson des brises* and Debussy's keyboard versions of Saint-Saëns's Second Symphony, Raff's *Humoresque en forme de valse* and Schumann's 'At the Fountain' are also part of the deal. All recordings date from 2017 and the star of the show surely has to be the pianist Jean-Pierre Armengaud. Those who invested in DG's collection can now usefully supplement it with this valuable three-disc collection.

A further outgrowth of Warner's 'Complete Works' arrives in the guise of **Impressions: The Sound of Debussy**, a veritable potpourri, all of which calls exclusively on recordings that are in the main collection. True, there are some individual short single pieces included. *Chanson des brises* is there and so is the whole of *Pour le piano*; but, as for the rest, we have the first two movements of Giulini's Philharmonia *La mer* (the stormy finale is left off), two of his *Nocturnes* ('Nuages' and 'Fêtes'), half of the *Suite bergamasque*, the finale of the Trio in G and so on. Maybe this will prove useful as a gift for someone who wants just that, the 'sound of ...' and nothing more. Speaking personally, I would have preferred a larger percentage of works presented in their entirety.

Sir Neville Marriner's recorded legacy hails mainly from the Decca and Philips stables but an impressive corpus of work for Capriccio is shared between Stuttgart



and London (Academy of St Martin in the Fields). A 14-CD set of the London recordings is forthcoming but in the meantime we have some impressive performances featuring the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (Marriner was their Principal Conductor between 1983 and 1989), a highlight being a fine digital set of Tchaikovsky's four orchestral suites, performances that combine geniality, deft playing and, in the finales of the Third and

I played this Vagn Holmboe set at a single sitting and loved every minute of it

Fourth Suites, a fair helping of the bravura excitement. Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin* Suite has plenty of drive and if the finale of *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* sounds a little muddled in places, impressive accounts of Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* and Honegger's Third Symphony more than make amends. Mahler's Fourth and Rachmaninov's Second Symphonies share a certain transparency, a quality that also informs Marriner's admirable performances of the Schumann symphonies. Also included is music by Beethoven, Richard Strauss, Copland and Gershwin, and rather cheesily put-together compendia of *West Side Story* and *Porgy and Bess* 'melodies'. All the same, the set can be enthusiastically recommended and the sound is excellent throughout.

Listening to Dacapo's set of **Vagn Holmboe's** Chamber Concertos and Sinfonias, excellently performed by the Danish National Chamber Orchestra under Hannu Koivula, had me searching for significant musical reference points. One that came to mind was Karl Amadeus Hartmann, who rewrote certain of his orchestral works just as Holmboe refashioned his four Op 73 Sinfonias (the last made up of 'Preludios' and 'Interludes') into a single work known as *Kairos* (or 'Time'). Consistently intense, the polyphonic language densely expressive, the revision's superior organisation places it among the great string-orchestra works of the post-war 20th century. The

chamber concertos take their lead from Hindemith and yet the desolate opening movement of the Seventh Concerto (1944-45, for oboe and orchestra) seems to anticipate Shostakovich in the 1950s, and so does the first minute or so of the Trumpet Concerto (the Chamber Concerto No 11 of 1948). Holmboe's ingeniously employed instrumental combinations include solo viola, solo violin (as well as violin and viola together), piano trio, piano, strings and timpani (with Bartók an obvious influence in the *Allegro molto* second movement), 'wood, brass and gut', trombone and viola with oboe. The beauty of these works is that they are so utterly different from one another; there is no Holmboe 'style', in the sense that there is no obvious Hartmann style. The recorded sound is superb throughout. I played this set at a single sitting and loved every minute of it. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Debussy Centenary Discoveries

Warner Classics (B) (3) 9029 69151-9

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Warner Classics (B) (3) 9029 57158-0

Sir Neville Marriner:

the Stuttgart Recordings

Capriccio (S) (15) C7230

Vagn Holmboe:

Chamber Concertos and Sinfonias

Dacapo (S) (6) 8 206004

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings



Treasurable broadcasts from Baden-Baden

Every instalment so far in SWR Music's **'Michael Gielen Edition'** has harboured its fair share of gems. Gielen's skill at capturing a work's logical flow, no matter what the style or period, was second to none; most of his performances stand to teach you something about the music that you didn't already know, or at the very least didn't realise you knew before hearing them.

The real stroke of genius in Volume 7 (which, in terms of recordings, covers the period 1961–2006) is in the programming. It's on disc 2, themed 'America', where the first six tracks feature segued performances, all of them sensitively balanced, from the one Stuttgart concert, opening with a fearless account of the bold and rhythmically faltering *Sun-Treader* by Ruggles, then relocating for Ives's *Central Park in the Dark*, reaching skywards while *General William Booth Enters into Heaven* and ending among the Reichian tones of McPhee's astonishingly forward-looking *Tabuh-tabuhan* of 1936. None of these live performances has ever been released before, nor Gielen's thrilling Baden-Baden account of Varèse's *Arcana*, a veritable starburst from start to finish. On the same disc, we also have Ives's *The Unanswered Question* and Steuermann's Weberian *Variations for Orchestra*.

On disc 1, Gielen focuses the maverick spirit of Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* (the imagined cathedral dome seeming more of a night sky than a temple) and *Taras Bulba* (especially the grand summation of 'The Prophecy and Death of Taras Bulba'). Both recordings date from the 1980s. His Ravel is high in drama, the complete *Daphnis et Chloë* (disc 7) especially memorable, *Alborada del gracioso* likewise, though weightier than most; and *La valse* (disc 8), another first release, is both rowdy and ultimately cataclysmic.

Gielen shapes Scriabin's *The Divine Poem* Symphony as if he's conducting Brahms, in a clear-headed approach along the lines of his similarly objective way with Mahler. There are also works by Busoni, Petrassi, Puccini, Wagner and Zemlinsky, plus

a grandly stated Reger Piano Concerto with Steven de Groote, Schreker's striking *Vorspiel zu einem Drama*, Hindemith's *Matthis der Maler* and Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung*. Each disc is themed ('On the Way to Consolidation', 'Kitsch or Art on TV', and so on), and the recordings, which emanate from various locations, are in the main excellent. The radio orchestras involved are from Stuttgart, Saarbrücken, Baden-Baden and Freiburg.

Gielen's greatest predecessor at Baden-Baden, **Hans Rosbaud** wasn't especially noted for his Tchaikovsky performances, but a new coupling of the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies from 1957 and 1954 respectively sheds significant fresh light on both works. In the Fifth's finale, the timpani crescendo that leads from the *Andante maestoso* introduction to the *Allegro vivace* main body of the movement should stretch unimpeded from bar 58 to bar 65, underpinning the *fortissimo* activity among the strings and woodwind. That's what happens here whereas with Pierre Monteux (see below), and with various other conductors, there's a loud punctuating wallop on timps as the *Allegro vivace* starts. What strikes me again and again about these Rosbaud performances is their sure sense of rhythm, while the degree of passion expressed in the Fifth's *Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza* – where sudden *fortissimo* chords have a Mahlerian impact – matches any other version for intensity.

The Fourth Symphony is, if anything, even more remarkable – with its solidity and directness, and the way that the sequences build at the core of the first movement. There's no increase in tempo, but the power of the playing is overwhelming, and at the close of the movement there is no distracting hiatus prior to the *fff* tremolando coda – the music runs straight on as if on the wings of a sudden impulse. The *Andante in modo di canzona* is initially warm and relaxed, speeding a little for the *Più mosso* passage at 4'08"; and the way that the cellos make their presence felt a little later on, from within the texture, is supportive and expressive (there are

unmistakable parallels here with Willem Mengelberg). Rosbaud's way proves for sure that with Tchaikovsky there's no need to generate hysteria, or push tempos, his handling of the finale proving that beyond doubt. Both the opening and closing pages generate enormous reserves of power, the woodwind and strings alternating with maximum force, while the return of the opening fanfares is awe-inspiring. And though it would be idle to claim that the South West German RSO is in the virtuoso class, the sensation of hearing a good orchestra being stretched to the limit is in itself a source of listening excitement. This is a truly wonderful release, perhaps the most impressive so far in SWR's admirable Rosbaud series. I'm told that Tchaikovsky's idol, Mozart, is next up for release, with plenty of featured concertos.

THE RECORDINGS



'Michael Gielen Edition' Volume 7

SWR Music © ® SWR19061CD



'Hans Rosbaud Conducts Tchaikovsky'

South West German RSO

SWR Music ® ② SWR19062CD

Stokowski's Tchaikovsky

Nothing could be further removed from Rosbaud's accounts of Tchaikovsky's Fourth and Fifth than Leopold Stokowski's 1944 broadcast recording of the *Pathétique* Symphony with the NBC SO, which joins three other versions in the conductor's discography. As Edward Johnson suggests in his typically authoritative note, this fine-sounding broadcast emanated from a period when Stokowski visited Toscanini's orchestra with key elements of his own style, including swooping portamentos, especially noticeable beyond the first movement's searing *Allegro vivo* development, and a rather doleful account of the *Allegro non troppo* section



Michael Gielen's skill at capturing the logical flow of a work, regardless of its style or period, was 'second to none'

earlier on in the same movement. The *Allegro con grazia* attempts charm, and partially succeeds; the third-movement march-scherzo attempts brilliance, but comparisons with the openings of virtually any NBC-Toscanini version (and there are a few to choose from) prove beyond doubt how Toscanini's 'white-hot, whiplash intensity' to which Johnson refers isn't quite matched by Stokowski. Also, not everyone will appreciate the big *ritardando* that falls heavily along the home straight. True, Toscanini also marks an easing of pace, but his approach though equally powerful is less disruptive. More troubling by far are Stokowski's cuts across the whole work, most of them small but irritating beyond words. Could it be that they were imposed because time was short and the same broadcast also included *Romeo and Juliet*? A shame, because Stokowski cues some magnificent playing from the orchestra, especially from the strings, and viewed overall his conception of the piece lacks very little either in terms of drama or a sense of tragedy. *Romeo and Juliet* again includes its fair share of Stokowskiisms, not least the quiet ending, which apparently follows a lead suggested by the composer. Again, the playing is superb, and the remastering is excellent. This set is recommended as a curio, and in many ways a great deal more than that.

THE RECORDING



'Stokowski Conducts Tchaikovsky'
NBC SO / Stokowski
Pristine Audio © PASC531

RCA's stereo Monteux legacy

This set is well worth owning, but the lack of a booklet means that essential information included in the parent set 'The Complete RCA Album Collection', which I reviewed in January 2015, needs clarifying. For example, the 'Prelude and Mazurka' from Delibes's *Coppélia* is 'RCA's earliest surviving stereo recording', which, as I said in 2015, 'apart from a spot of tape rumble near the beginning, is pretty stunning given its age, certainly better than the Toscanini stereo broadcasts from the following year'. Also, in case you're left wondering, the first movement fragment from Debussy's *La mer* is all that survives of the stereo tapes, which are otherwise lost. The Boston trawl includes a vivid *Petrushka* and Tchaikovsky's last three symphonies. The Fourth is interesting in that Monteux's approach has details in common with Mengelberg's Concertgebouw 78s from 30 years earlier (1929), the accelerating sequences at the centre of the first movement, for example, and the conspicuous hiatus just prior to the coda. Also the Scherzo is playful, the double basses very vividly recorded. The Fifth is excitable and intense, the *Pathétique* (which sounds remarkably good for 1955) extremely taut.

Also on offer is Brahms's Violin Concerto with Henryk Szerying (LSO). Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, recorded in Rome in 1957 with Risë Stevens, Lisa Della Casa and Roberta Peters, is in some respects similar to Toscanini's NBC broadcast of Act 2 from a few years earlier, with

Stevens sounding similar in timbre and overall approach (intense and vibrant) to Nan Merriman. Highlights for me include a stunning display from Leonid Kogan in Khachaturian's Violin Concerto recorded in Boston; and a 1961 Chicago SO account of Franck's Symphony, which features a broadly paced and nobly stated account of the first movement, the playing throughout magnificent. There are also fine San Francisco recordings of Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung* (broader than Gielen's by three and a half minutes) and Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*.

THE RECORDING



'Pierre Monteux: Complete RCA Stereo Recordings'
RCA © 8 9075 81634-2

The Art of Erling Blöndal Bengtsson

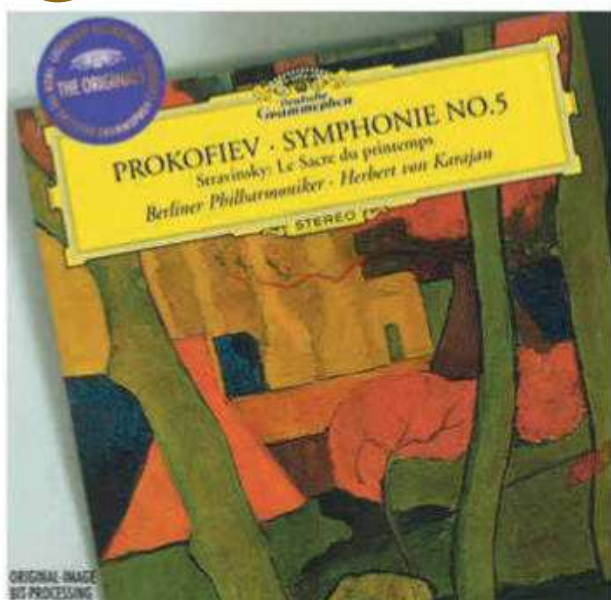
The fine Danish cellist is the subject of a multivolume series from Danacord, the latest (the eighth) including the second version of Elgar's Concerto to have cropped up in the series. The first one, from 1973 (on DACOCD724), was in mono and featured the Iceland SO under Jean-Pierre Jacquillat. This later, stereo version (2000), from NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation) Radio, is with the Oslo PO under Alexander Lazarev and is maybe marginally more inward-looking than its predecessor, but both suggest a deep knowledge of Elgar's emotional climate. Also included here is Grieg's Cello Sonata with Kjell Bækkelund, just as moving as Leonard Rose's version with Leonid Hambro (see last month's Replay), and even more personal. Shostakovich's Second Piano Trio involves the talents of Bækkelund and violinist Arve Tellefsen, while Brahms's Op 114 Trio (with a viola replacing the clarinet) has Lars Anders Tomter playing the viola and Håkon Austbø the piano. Bengtsson was a Piatigorsky pupil, and you can hear 'his master's voice' in virtually every performance; like Piatigorsky, he made a consistently beautiful sound, which benefited tough meat such as the Klaus Egge and Ketil Hvoslef concertos, which are also included in the set. **G**

THE RECORDING



'A NRK Tribute to Erling Blöndal Bengtsson'
Bengtsson vc et al
Danacord © 2 DACOCD780

Classics RECONSIDERED



David Gutman and **Andrew Mellor** lock horns over the pros and cons of Karajan's classic 1968 recording of Prokofiev's Fifth with the Berlin Philharmonic



Prokofiev

Symphony No 5

Berlin Philharmonic / Herbert von Karajan

DG

I need hardly elaborate on the quality of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and here they play as magnificently for Karajan as they have ever done. The playing itself seems even to out do the excellent New York Philharmonic. The sheer nimble dexterity of the violins, with absolute unanimity even in those bars that have an inordinate number of notes packed into each, their absolute accuracy on every note even in the highest and swiftest passages,

all this is remarkable in itself. Yet there is never the slightest suggestion of virtuosity for its own sake. Wind solos, too, are masterly, not only technically but in expression – just note the playing of the solo clarinet tune immediately after the start of the finale. Karajan gives a most compelling performance. If you can, try a short way into the first movement, where the violins take up the big tune (fig 14) and note the blazing conviction with which he urges the music on through all the following pages, where in other readings the tension sags. He makes no attempt to be 'meaningful', as Bernstein does in this movement (causing some very slow

speeds), yet still plays it for all it is worth. The second movement is incomparable for its verve, while in the slow movement the wonderful string quality adds so much to this interpretation. The recording is very good indeed and with notably natural woodwind balance. The only odd thing is that side-drum rolls seem to have been caught without any tone – they suggest a frightened bird battering its wings against the wires of a cage. The tam-tam is perhaps too much of a good thing, for it almost knocks one out of the room. But these are comparatively small points in an otherwise superb production. **Trevor Harvey (6/69)**

David Gutman Karajan's reputation has taken a knock in recent years, but this has to be one of his best recordings. There isn't much in Trevor Harvey's original review I'd want to take issue with. Unless, of course, one takes a radically different view of the piece itself. Should we still see it as shaped by the Great Patriotic War, 'a symphony of the greatness of the human spirit'? Or does Karajan's sonorous interpretation give all that highfalutin officialese too much credence? He doesn't dawdle, but there is a faster, lighter, edgier way of playing the score, as favoured by such Soviet-trained conductors as Mariss Jansons. Karajan seems to have taken his cue from Serge Koussevitzky in Boston.

Andrew Mellor TH cites some key strengths, although I do hear some wobbly tuning from the low brass (first movement, 0'34"), and there is the odd lapse in ensemble. More importantly, the quality he cites in the strings – perhaps what you refer to as 'sonorous interpretation' – jars to my 2018 ears in a score that is most interesting for its timbral and harmonic

edge. The Berlin strings at 5'55" into the *Andante* sound like a frightened duchess. You mention 'edgier' performances, but doesn't the sheer range of orchestras that have recorded the piece now mean we've become accustomed to (and might prefer) a less cultivated orchestral sound in a work like this, whether Soviet or otherwise?

DG There's a fair bit to unpack there. It's certainly the case that Karajan's sophisticated manner doesn't preclude the odd mishap. Indeed, that's one of the things that makes his analogue-era music-making more 'alive' and engaging than legend suggests. In 1968 he lacked the technological wherewithal to suck the growth and continuity out of his own performances, and what edits and manipulations there are can be endearingly audible. In general, I have no problem with the subtler-hued 'westernised' Prokofiev of Ormandy, Celibidache, André Previn, Marin Alsop and company. Nor, I suspect, would a pianist-composer who played with the great orchestras of Paris, London, Berlin and the US before remaking himself as a Soviet Russian after 1936. For me,

Karajan's slightly aloof, all-encompassing gaze makes sense of the music's symphonic aspirations while others spray-paint the incidental details. But do you have to be 60 plus to respond favourably to that archetypal Karajan sound?

AM Perhaps it's time for me to put my cards on the table and admit that I *do* find this a tremendously engaging and successful recording in spite of Karajan's heavenward stare. The difference with my generation (the under-forties) is possibly that we've accepted that sound as a benchmark in certain spiritual, transcendent repertoire from *Parsifal* to Grieg's Piano Concerto but are looking for something different in mechanical or brutalist 20th-century music, where Karajan's detachment offers a sanitised version of the whole story. That said, where this recording really springs out of the speakers is in the *Allegro marcato*, and it's because the intensity is there. Does that intensity come from the engineers – who are willing to get in close and create a fizz – as much as from Karajan's taut control of the instrumental production line?



Herbert von Karajan's 1968 Prokofiev Fifth Symphony has long enjoyed classic status. Does it deserve it?

DG I guess I hear more concentration throughout – the *Andante* isn't flawless, it's true, but for once there are no dead passages. Still, the scherzo is a particular success from a conductor and orchestra not always applauded for their wit or keen sense of rhythm. While the sound engineering can scarcely be heard as 'natural' nowadays, I find it wonderfully evocative. The focus is often on the strings (one can't quite believe the first movement's blast of tone from 3'11" – unless that's my ageing digital transfer), yet brass and percussion are not mixed down as much as in many Karajan recordings. I have the LP, too – how handsome the artwork looks in large format! And I still like the way the underlying spaciousness of the Jesus-Christus-Kirche gives everything a halo. Do you agree with TH's reservations about the side drum and tam-tam? I can see what he means about the one, but not the other.

AM I lust after a slightly more spacious, Chandos-style sound. The side drum is a case in point: in the *Andante* it sounds alone and arid, like it's been recorded

elsewhere and dropped into the picture quite close-up. But in the *Allegro marcato* it's more embedded. It would be nice to hear the trombones, horns and side drum sounding on the edges a little more but with no less presence, much like the flute at 9'30" in the *Andante*. As for the tam-tam, you have to go all-in with this piece, and that's what Karajan's percussionists and engineers do. It's interesting that the strikes at 7'72" and 8'00" in the *Adagio* third movement don't sound as cataclysmic as in other recordings – either because they're too foregrounded, or because Karajan doesn't drag the tempo here as other conductors do (others give the impression that we're suddenly wading through a thicker substance).

DG TH can't have heard very much gong on his previous vinyl LPs! I love Karajan's way with the *Adagio*, even if its lucidity is achieved in part by smoothing (or smooching) over Prokofiev's accents. There's not much undergrowth and not really enough piano. As in the first movement, I clocked small pockets of

technical uncertainty. The bass line, never ideally clear, goes awry at fig 67 (5'23"). But somehow it doesn't matter.

AM There are a few more instances: ensemble isn't great at 6'52" in the *Adagio*, and there are tuning issues from the strings in the slow introduction to the finale, as well as an obvious edit point with the tempo change at 0'57".

DG You're being mean now! For me, the finale clinches the deal, unless you find that intro a little lordly. The denouement is every bit as tight as it is under the likes of Sir Simon Rattle. Microphones can expose a shambles at the point just before the close where the dynamics are hushed as if to make us confront the compromised quality of the *Allegro giocoso* jollification. Not so here. And the cumulative excitement takes me by surprise every time.

AM You second-guessed me there. I do find the introduction lordly (Karajan, eyes clasped shut), like an invasion from another world – a long way from the vivid, direct colours of the album cover you talked about. But after that it comes together magnificently, and this is where those little slips don't matter. The final triumph comes in that wonderful little coda – we feel the cumulative momentum so fiercely as that ghostly runaway train chuffs headlong towards the buffers.

DG Great image. I'll try to sum up without spoiling it. This is a performance in which almost every phrase has been thought through, every climax perfectly placed. What you won't find is the squeaky-clean perfection of legend. That doesn't make it any less of a 'classic'. I think we're more or less agreed on that? I'd forgotten, incidentally, that Karajan had just directed the work with George Szell's Cleveland Orchestra at the 1967 Salzburg Festival – one wonders how that went. Or, more pertinently, just how much of the present recording's success is more properly and directly attributable to the players. That said, it's worth recalling what a hash a later generation of Berliners would make of that equivocal final 'reveal' in 1990 as part of the orchestra's only Prokofiev symphony cycle to date. There's much to be said for the old-style omniscient maestro.

AM There is also much to be said for today's brave new world of recording live concerts with patches; I feel deep down that at least a part of Karajan's approach was an attempt to capture the live experience, for all his supposed insistence on perfection. **G**

Books



Andrew Achenbach on a treat for all Vaughan Williams enthusiasts:

'Dip in almost anywhere and you'll encounter affectionate testimony to VW's generosity of spirit and wicked sense of humour'



Jeremy Nicholas welcomes a fine book from an underrated pianist:

'Susan Tomes's tone of voice is that of a younger person – inquisitive, energetic, entrepreneurial and gently provocative'

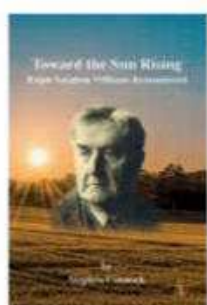
Toward the Sun Rising

Ralph Vaughan Williams Remembered

By Stephen Connock

Albion Music Ltd, HB, 394pp, £30

ISBN 978-0-99562-843-4



It was back in early 1996 that Stephen Connock (president and co-founder of the thriving Ralph Vaughan

Williams Society) hit upon the happy notion of interviewing (and in some instances filming) key individuals who had come into contact with the great man. In all there were no fewer than 67 encounters, 46 of which are preserved here under the label of 'Primary Memories', and they are joined by some 39 scarcely less stimulating 'Additional Memories' collated from published and unpublished sources. The contributors' often lofty stature is matched only by their frequently astonishing longevity (I'd forgotten, for instance, that Roy Douglas died as recently as 2015 at the ripe age of 107).

Douglas's is one of the standout recollections, with absorbing commentary on his collaborative role, which included copying and correcting Vaughan Williams's manuscripts. Not surprisingly, he was stung by the *Observer* music critic Eric Blom's comment around the time of the Manchester world premiere of the *Sinfonia antartica* ('There's a man going around saying he orchestrated Vaughan Williams's music'), a pernicious rumour that prompted the composer to rise to his defence ('if Roy Douglas had scored it then it would have sounded a great deal better'). You'll also find especially valuable contributions from Ursula Vaughan Williams (who provided Connock with an initial list of contacts), Michael Kennedy, Simona Pakenham, David Willcocks, Evelyn Barbirolli, Trudy Bliss, Ruth Gipps, Robert Armstrong (whose memories of the madrigalian 'Singeries' that took place every month at the Vaughan Williamses' Hanover Terrace

home in London paint a vivid picture), John Noble, Jean Stewart (dedicatee of the Second String Quartet), Ruth Dyson (who likens VW's occasional bouts of rage to 'an "Old Testament" wrath which was quite terrifying if you were on the wrong end of it'), Roy Henderson and Jill Balcon.

Both Joseph Cooper and Phyllis Sellick have lots to say on the Two-Piano Concerto, while John Denison and Leonard Hancock recall the flawed 1951 Festival of Britain/Covent Garden production of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. William Cole and William Llewellyn offer some fascinating insights into the Leith Hill Festival, and Sallie Ashe spills the beans on her grandfather Gilmour Jenkins's affair with Ursula Wood ('Ralph was aware of the relationship and took a very relaxed and open attitude toward it'). There are also seven appendices, which embrace VW's concert reviews and programme notes, obituaries and appreciations of close family members, as well as memories from Christopher 'Kiffer' Finzi of his father (and VW's dear friend) Gerald Finzi. Last, but not least, Connock himself pens an eloquent distillation of the book's contents, with particular focus on Adeline Fisher (VW's first wife, a saintly and stoic figure immobilised by chronic arthritis for much of their 54-year marriage), Ursula Wood, the composer's prowess as a teacher and his experiences during the First World War, as well as his religious and political views.

Dip in almost anywhere and you'll encounter affectionate and detailed testimony to VW's bigness of heart and sheer generosity of spirit, magnetic charm and strength of personality, down-to-earth modesty (he had the happy knack of making people feel immediately at ease in his company), loyalty, curiosity (after listening to the broadcast premiere of Britten's *Spring Symphony*, he made the effort to attend a further two RFH performances in quick succession, before deciding that it wasn't really his cup of tea) and wicked sense of humour. Mention of the latter brings a priceless anecdote, told by the composer

Jeremy Dale Roberts, of VW sitting next to Walford Davies when one of his own sacred works was being performed alongside the latter's *Solemn Melody*. Apparently, Davies leant over and whispered that he had written his piece 'on his knees', to which VW replied: 'I don't mind telling you that I composed my work on my bum!'

There's also much variety of opinion on VW's ability with the baton, though anyone who took part in his legendary Leith Hill performances of the *St Matthew Passion* (a work he revered perhaps above all others) invariably emerged the more spiritually enriched for the experience. Particularly touching, to my mind, are John Carol Case's memories of a performance of the *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*: 'His stick-work was unimportant; he really conducted with his eyes. As we all know, the *Fantasia* opens with eight bars of cello solo and then in comes the baritone with "This is the truth sent from above". At this point he turned and just looked at me over the top of his half-moon glasses and without his saying a word I knew exactly what he wanted: he was the only conductor I worked with who could do this. I once asked myself "what did his eyes convey?" The answer was simple: total sincerity and belief in the music.'

A job well done, then. Indeed, as a Vaughan Williams companion, Connock's rewarding anthology (timed to mark the 60th anniversary of the composer's death) is hard to beat, and enthusiasts will surely derive much lasting pleasure from it.

Andrew Achenbach

Speaking the Piano

Reflections on Learning and Teaching

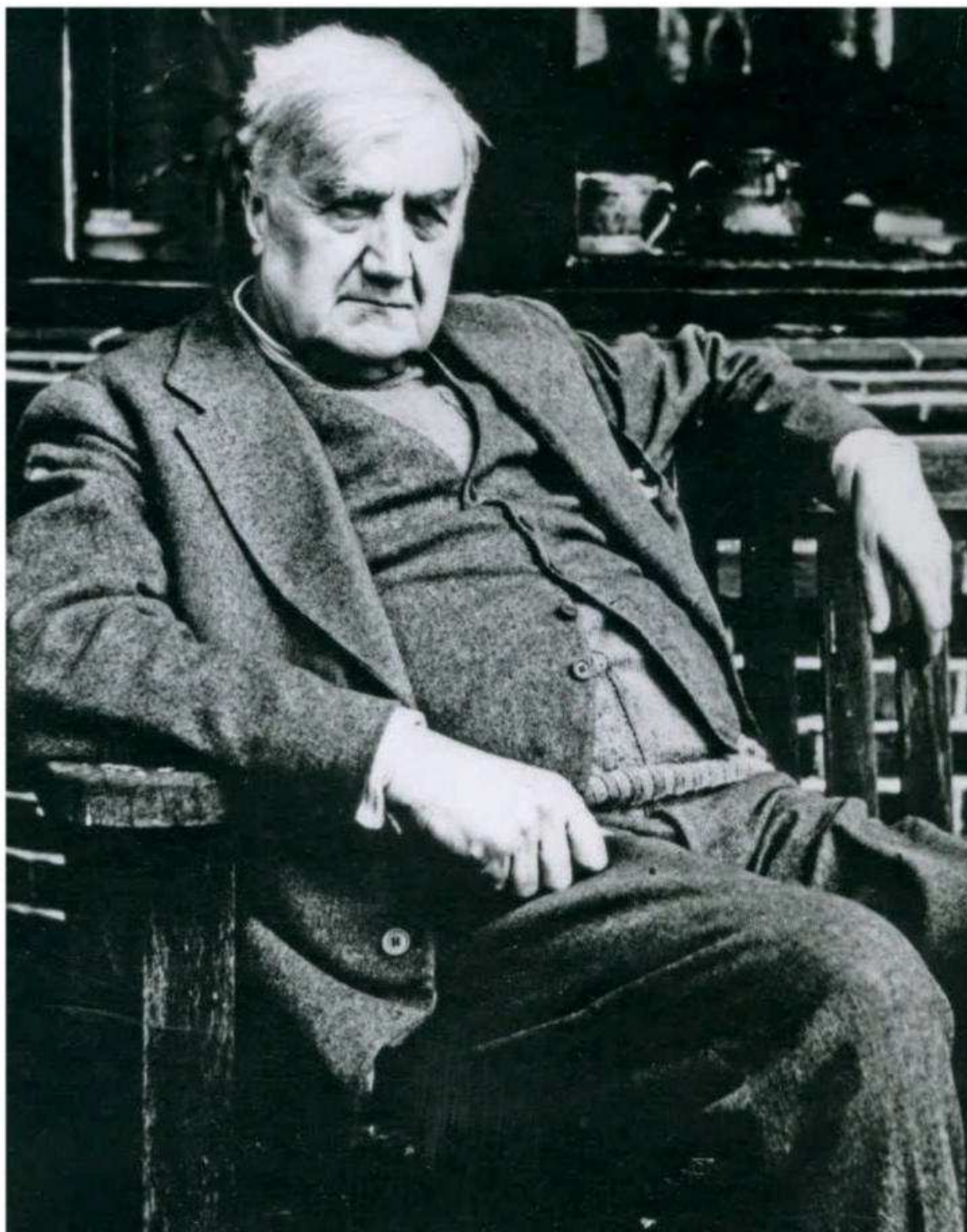
By Susan Tomes

Boydell Press, HB, 277pp, £19.99

ISBN 978-1-78327-325-6



When my biography of Leopold Godowsky was first published some thirty years ago, I prefaced the narrative



Vaughan Williams: his bigness of heart and magnetic charm revealed by those who encountered him

with a quote from Confucius: 'I do not seek to be known; I seek to be worthy to be known.' It was a quote that Godowsky himself was fond of using. It is one that could well apply to Susan Tomes. The first woman to take a music degree at King's College, Cambridge, widely admired member of Domus, the Gaudier Ensemble and the Florestan Trio, a discography of over 50 CDs to her name, a *Guardian* columnist and the author of four highly praised books – why isn't she better known?

One of the reasons, I think, is because those whose principal role is associated with chamber music tend to get overlooked, while star pianists who occasionally play chamber music do not. Also, there is an engaging modesty about the author, present throughout the pages of this and her earlier tomes (pun intended), a priority to share and

collaborate rather than shine and showboat, that eschews the cult of celebrity. It is plain from the lessons described in these pages that she is a teacher who not only has long and exceptionally wide experience but also the temperament and desire to learn from her students. Though clearly a sought-after teacher, one cannot imagine her following the example of the great violinist Nathan Milstein who, she reveals, when living in London in the 1970s, charged a whopping £80 per lesson, equivalent today to £872.

The somewhat gnomonic title of Tomes's book comes from something that Theodor Leschetizky (one of the greatest piano teachers of the 19th century) is reported to have said to Artur Schnabel: 'You must speak the piano.' The first section is devoted to teaching – recollections of lessons given to various of her students who have sought her wisdom and advice, or presented her with interesting, difficult-

but-valid or bizarre problems. Her 19 short essays on 'enlisting the imagination', how to listen to yourself, the Piano Club (what she calls her own 'homely' masterclasses), respecting the score, 'to sway or not to sway', and similar aspects of music-making are illustrated by anecdote and remembered conversations.

The second section of the book (pages 131-246) is called 'Learning'. By far the longest of its four essays (pages 131-178), entitled 'Beethoven among the Alpine flowers', is a fascinating and similarly valuable recollection of the masterclasses Tomes attended with the Hungarian pianist György Sebők (1922-99). She scribbled frantic notes during these lessons in Banff (Canada) and, later, Ernen (Switzerland) and draws on these extensively to capture the spirit and substance of the experience, and (what she considered to be) Sebők's helpful and practical comments. 'You have courage,' he said to her when she confessed to being nervous about playing in front of the class, 'but better would be to have trust.' Before her performance of a duo sonata with the violinist Krycia Osostowicz: 'You don't need to rehearse. You should know how to catch the butterfly with the powder still on its wings.' (There are several examples of the sage in action on YouTube.) Tomes obviously reveres this influential figure in her life but notes that Sebők never socialised with his students unless he had to and remained a remote, aloof figure away from the masterclass. A lesson in itself, one way or another.

I can't imagine Tomes would not join a student for a drink after a lesson – especially after her self-submersion in the jazz world. How rare is that for a classical musician? 'Not all those who wander are lost' – a sign on a medieval wall in her native city of Edinburgh – is the title of the chapter that evokes for her the spirit of jazz. Here she records her journey, absorption of that very different way of life and music-making, and her eventual success in the field, before the realisation that she would never be fully accepted in the jazz community.

Susan Tomes is now in her mid-sixties but her tone of voice is that of a much younger person – inquisitive, energetic, entrepreneurial and gently provocative. Above all – and this is the great value of *Speaking the Piano* – she dispenses insight and information with grace and clarity. Despite its title and inevitably favouring the piano, the precepts which Tomes articulates are equally applicable to all instrumentalists – and indeed musicians of every kind, professional and amateur.

Jeremy Nicholas

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Debussy's *La mer*

Rob Cowan chooses his top recordings of Debussy's seascape which, with its harmonic and rhythmic complexities, helped establish the composer's reputation as the founding father of musical modernism

Asked to name one orchestral work that best defines the fledgling 20th century in musical terms, I wouldn't say late Mahler, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* or Schoenberg's Five Orchestral Pieces, but rather a cross-Channel, triple-tier seascape that thunders through the ill-applied cliché 'Impressionism' like a tsunami and lands us in mid-ocean, its inner restlessness responsive to any number of recorded interpretations. Debussy, a true lover of the sea (though he couldn't swim), started *La mer* in Burgundy in 1904 and continued working on it in Jersey, then in Dieppe. Intriguing harmonic and rhythmic complexities reign throughout the score, though it's easy to forget that the pounding pulse that marks the close of the work's finale, 'Dialogue du vent et de la mer' (hereafter referred to as iii), is as violent as any music from the period. Furthermore, this strong pulse wasn't merely replication of a powerful seaborne current, for it was written in the period when Debussy fell madly in love with the singer Emma Bardac. There I rest my case.

Sviatoslav Richter rated *La mer* alongside Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Wagner's *Ring* for musical significance, and yet after the work's premiere (October 15, 1905), J Jemain wrote in *Le ménestrel* that Debussy 'avoids all that might resemble a melody, a leading theme, however short', which is pretty difficult to imagine now, more than a century later, when the 'themes' are so indelibly embedded in our musical memory banks. Once or twice heard and *La mer* becomes part of your musical DNA.

FIRST TO LEAVE PORT

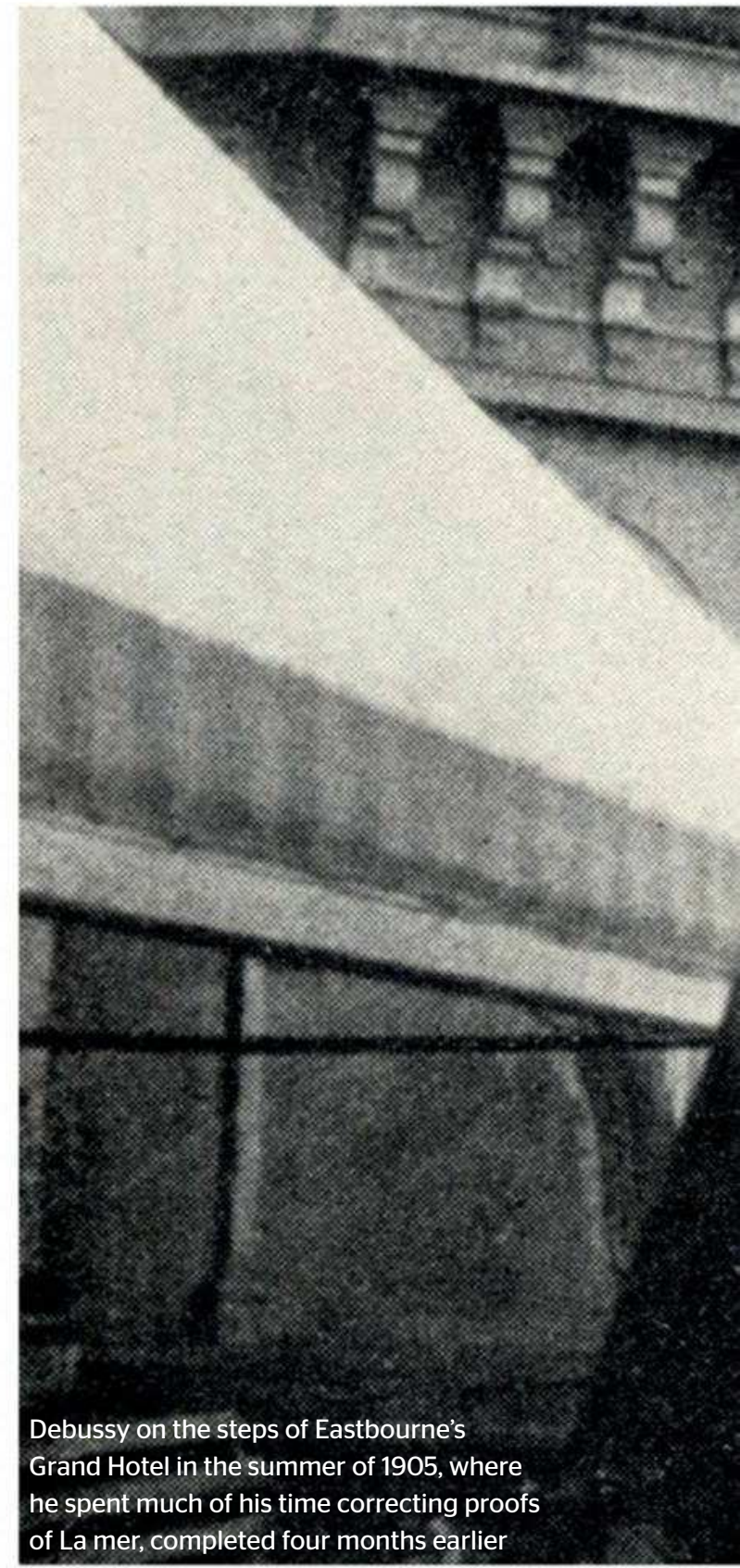
Among the earliest recordings of *La mer* to hit the stores (or, should I say, shores) was

the one that **Piero Coppola** set down in 1932 with the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra. Coppola's laudable interpretative priorities include nifty tempos, vivid hairpin dynamics and an especially dramatic account of the passage for 16 divided cellos in 'De l'aube à midi sur la mer' (hereafter i) – marked *Très rythmé* (4'18"), which is precisely how it sounds. 'Jeux de vagues' (hereafter ii) cavorts and frolics at a tempo way beyond the norm. Coppola's 1932 *La mer* has a bold, freshly minted feel to it and sounds more like a live production than many a live recording from years later. But it wasn't his first.

I thank transfer guru Ward Marston for allowing me access to a conceptually similar Coppola version from 1929 with the 'Grand Orchestre Symphonique' (HMV shellac – nla), which turns out to be historically significant in one key respect: iii features brass 'fanfares' (albeit very distantly recorded) that would – had Debussy left them in – be on page 157 of my Eulenberg score, above *forte* woodwind and tremolando strings. The story goes that the 'fanfare' tune so resembled the five-note title-phrase of the then relatively recent song 'Ciribiribin' (Alberto Pestalozza, 1898) that every time the passage appeared in concert there would be titters among the audience. Hence its excision, which in my view is a great shame, as it suggests a desperate alarm amid the storm. Coppola's better-recorded 1932 version doesn't include it, and to the best of my knowledge he is the only conductor who has left us two complete recordings of *La mer* covering both textual options.

Arturo Toscanini first performed *La mer* in Milan in 1909, just four years after the premiere. He actually corresponded with the composer, who interestingly granted his request to bolster the divided cello passage

with violas. Also, in the finale he alters the *ff* pizzicato chord at one bar before fig 46 to arco (Guido Cantelli does the same). I have seven Toscanini versions to hand (covering the period 1935-53), the best-recorded being from 1950 (RCA), and the most driven from 1945 (Dante/Lys – nla). The 1953 NBC broadcast balances spontaneity with characteristic transparency and energy, but what really makes the Guild release unmissable is just over 90 minutes' worth of rehearsal, where the volatile octogenarian maestro tirelessly drills his players on every conceivable detail in the score. If you don't know *La mer* before listening to Toscanini's rehearsal of it, you certainly will afterwards. I especially like the way he insists on a *lamentoso* feel for the last movement's wailing woodwind themes – though here no one quite matches Serge Koussevitzky with the New York Philharmonic in 1942



Debussy on the steps of Eastbourne's Grand Hotel in the summer of 1905, where he spent much of his time correcting proofs of *La mer*, completed four months earlier



(surely the most imposing of Koussevitzky's recordings of the work; available on West Hill Radio Archive, 7/13).

There are many parallels between Toscanini's *La mer* and that of the conductor who was widely considered to have been his protégé, **Guido Cantelli** – their approach is both brightly lit and as natural as the waters that the music reflects. Cantelli was a true master when it came to balancing the forces under his command (the Philharmonia in this case, in 1954), though unless the rather veiled sound is playing tricks on me, he too adds violas to the divided cellos in i. Still, viewed overall, this is among the most musical and certainly the best played of vintage recordings of *La mer*.

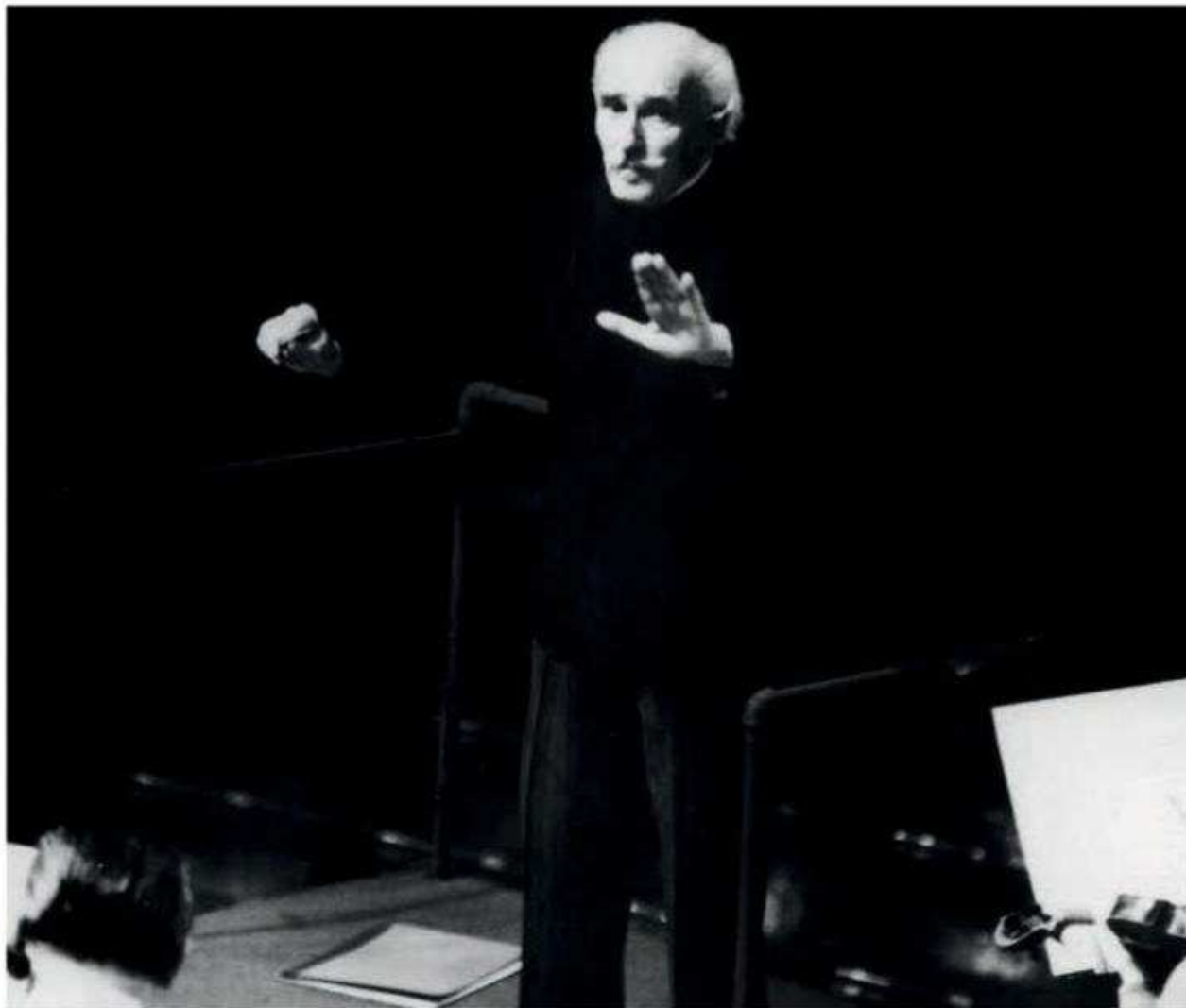
While Toscanini's brand of excitement is Apollonian in style, **Victor de Sabata**'s has the feel of an excited Dionysian free-for-all,

especially at the climax of ii. De Sabata's *La mer* (1948) is malleable, curvaceous and has accelerating climaxes that speed across the waves without any sense of compromise. Furthermore, it includes the fanfares in iii; they're often played on trumpets, but on de Sabata's recording they cry from afar on horns (from 6'35", track 3), as they do also on Roger Désormière's excellent 1950 Supraphon recording. If you can tolerate scratchy acetate sound, there's an electrifying 1939 broadcast with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under Pierre Monteux (RCO Live), convincingly flexible and with the fanfares in iii startlingly prominent. Other accounts with the same orchestra (under Eduard van Beinum, Bernard Haitink and Mariss Jansons), though fine in their different ways, aren't quite so memorable.

TRANSATLANTIC ADVENTURES

Charles Munch's Boston Symphony Orchestra recording (1956) is distinguished by some exceptionally refined execution, especially from strings and woodwind – it's warm but not quilted, with deft phrasing in ii, though at 0'45" the trilling strings are hardly *piano*. Munch's *La mer* is red-blooded and presses forwards consistently, most memorably in i and ii; but although iii is lively enough, the elements are kept at bay: I'd call it a storm overheard rather than overhead, but Munch does give us the fanfares, brazenly delivered by horns and trumpets.

La mer appears to have been something of a stock in trade for **Herbert von Karajan**. Of the four Karajan versions I've listened to, the one that made the strongest impression – somewhat Teutonic, it's true, but charged with atmosphere – was



An energetic Toscanini 'leaves no pebble unturned' in his 1953 recording with the NBC SO

recorded with the Berlin Philharmonic in January 1977. At the start of the work, darkness reigns, and dawn takes time to break. Some tempos are slower than prescribed, but once at the 6'00" mark, or thereabouts, we finally set sail towards what turns out to be a positively Brucknerian coda. As for ii, the build-up is impressively three-dimensional; and the deafening centrepiece of iii at 3'08" will shake your joists, though there's what sounds like a trumpet blooper about 40 seconds later. Karajan includes the fanfares in iii, on trumpets.

Fritz Reiner (1960) also includes the fanfares, and like Karajan takes a very broad view of i. Reiner is a master of musical transitions, and the way he allows the music to pick up speed, always subtly and on the wings of some exquisite playing from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, is a minor miracle in itself. Reiner's

hallmark precision is everywhere in evidence, with cut-glass tremolandos from the strings and pinpoint staccatos from both strings and woodwind. The warmer gusts in ii are intimate rather than schmaltzy, and as iii rolls in you sense the hiss of the waves as well as their immense weight. This is the ultimate virtuoso *La mer*, but I say that in full appreciation of its profoundly musical qualities.

Ernest Ansermet knew Debussy personally (as did another master interpreter of *La mer*, Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht), and he also includes the fanfares on trumpets in iii, literally bold as brass on all four of his Decca recordings. Best perhaps is the 1957 version, a memorably dramatic production in which execution is unusually taut and i has a restless quality, with oscillating tempos (not all of them marked) often with a tendency to push forwards. On all four recordings there's a conspicuous pause

around fig 5 in i (2'34" in this instance), but the chorale that closes the movement is truly *Très lent*; and even though the tam-tam is disappointingly distant, ii draws to a glittering, animated climax.

Daniel Barenboim sees Debussy as the founding father of musical modernism, and his 1978 Paris Orchestra recording has a crude, blustery impact that does indeed suggest confrontation, the sort that modernism would soon countenance in full. The recorded balance is imperfect, the manner of execution occasionally awkward. The divided cellos are placed right under your nose in the first movement (4'39"), the concertmaster's role is granted soloistic prominence (3'07" into i; 1'58" into ii) and certain inner details are obscured. Still, there's great dialogue between lower strings and tam-tam at the start of iii (though the use of portamentos near the end grates somewhat), and Barenboim's vocalising is evidence of his involvement, much as it is on a more moderately stated performance from 2000 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, available on DVD (EuroArts: see Abbado entry in discography).

BLANDNESS, BALANCE AND THE MAD EXCITEMENT OF SEA SWELL

The polar opposite of Barenboim's *La mer* (and Fritz Reiner's), is **Charles Dutoit's** relatively swift traversal from 1989, a smooth tonal blend packed with detail but hardly spinning a narrative. With fine engineering an undoubted plus, the performance is at its most compelling towards the end of i, where Dutoit and his players effectively reduce the tempo prior to the coda. The waves in ii surge forwards with impressive impetus; I'm lifted atop the current in iii, with very audible fanfares, but when the last chord has sounded I'm left bone dry.

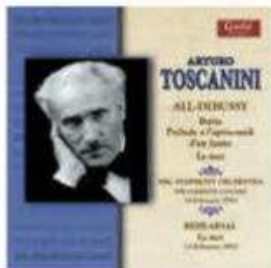
Not so with **Armin Jordan** and the Suisse Romande Orchestra in 1990. The orchestra is in much finer fettle than it was under Ansermet, though the interpretative axis between clarity and subtle voicing recalls Ansermet's heyday,

HISTORICAL CHOICE

NBC Symphony Orchestra / Toscanini

Guild Ⓟ ② GHCD2271/2

Toscanini leaves no pebble unturned: this energetic octogenarian puts the musicians



through their paces in pursuit of the ideal as he hears it, meaning precision, transparent textures, drama and a sense of where the elements are leading us.

DVD CHOICE

Lucerne Festival Orchestra / Abbado

EuroArts Ⓟ ② DVD 426 4438

Watching performers on screen holds little



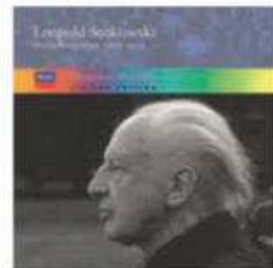
magic for me (what I hear is what matters most), but Abbado is excepted. His clear beat, the intensity of his facial expressions and the visual logic of his gestures remind us of the conductor's vital role.

WILD CARD

LSO / Stokowski

Decca Ⓢ ⑤ 475 1452CD5

Imagine a Disney *La mer* (high-flying albatrosses, leaping dolphins, cold-eyed



sharks on the prowl and all weathers), and that's what this *La mer* amounts to: a film soundtrack rather than a three-tier symphony, thrilling and alarmingly immoderate.

and Jordan follows Ansermet's lead by including the fanfares. Everything is in its proper place: woodwind in relation to strings, strings in relation brass, fine-tipped percussion (especially important), and the gentle wash of the score's many softer passages. It's a real joy to listen to, the work not only of Jordan and his players but also of his expert producer Michel Garcin.

Rather than deliver a feast of subtle asides, **Leopold Stokowski** and the LSO (1970) give us the full monty – texturally explicit, uncommonly broad in i, the playful waves in ii glamorously magnified. This *La mer* pulls you under, with wildly oscillating playback levels, polarised stereo, and blazing fanfares in iii. It's good for the occasional dramatic dip, but whatever you do, don't set up your beach hut nearby.

Of **Pierre Boulez**'s two recordings (with the New Philharmonia Orchestra for Sony in 1966 – 8/67; and with the Cleveland Orchestra for DG in 1991), it's the later version that offers the more refined listening experience. The very opening is a gentle curtain-raiser revealing a tranquil dawn, and thereafter Boulez displays a characteristically meticulous attitude to dynamics. Well-balanced sound means that even the tiniest detail fits securely within the frame, and come the close of i, a sense of tenderness gives way to genuine grandeur, crowned by a cinematic tam-tam. Perhaps Boulez deals less playfully with the waves than some in ii, though again it's such a joy to hear so much dovetailing detail; and if the colossal full-throttle thunderbolt at 2'56" into iii doesn't quite match Karajan in 1977 for impact, it works within the context of a performance that significantly is all of a piece. An earlier Cleveland classic under George Szell in 1963 (Sony, 7/64) is keen-edged, alert and superbly played.

And so to **Claudio Abbado** and what in 2003 was the brand new Lucerne Festival Orchestra. Right from the off you notice how Abbado has balanced instrumental lines so that everything is heard – basses, cellos, violas and timpani, all are clearly audible. I've never heard such luminous reportage of what the woodwind are doing as the work draws to a close, and when Abbado employs portamentos among the strings, as he does in ii, it's to appropriate expressive effect. I know that some readers object to applause (both this and the Mahler Symphony No 2 coupling on the CD were recorded at the same concert), but I urge you to make an exception for the sake of a remarkable recording. A well-directed DVD based on the same performance is also available (and features recordings of *La mer* also under Barenboim and Ormandy).



Stokowski pulls off 'a Disney *La mer*' with the LSO

A MARITIME INSTINCT ... OR NOT

Stéphane Denève and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (recorded in 2011 and 2012) achieve forward momentum and an illusion of sea swell (you'll definitely need your travel sickness tablets for this trip) so that by the time you reach the end of i on the crest of a very large wave you feel as if you truly have arrived. Denève is consistently alert to detail, and the dynamic recorded sound at times defies belief (the very end of the work, for example). What I like most about Denève's performance is its naturalness, the result less of careful thinking than of musical instinct, or so it seems.

François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles (2012) provide us with a version that employs instruments from Debussy's own time – the first on disc to do so – and an approach to playing them that includes a very discreet use of vibrato among the strings. This is fine except maybe at 2'25" into ii, where the *très espressif* directive suggests more of an inner glow. Dynamics are in the main faithfully observed, though what should be quietly trilling strings at 0'47" into ii strike me as too loud. Elsewhere, only the harps (which have such a key role in this score) shy from prominence – presumably because of the instruments used. Like Abbado's Lucerne version, this is a live recording, though unlike with Abbado you'd never guess: there's hardly a hint of an audience.

In contrast to Roth, Sir **Mark Elder**'s Hallé Orchestra *La mer* (a brilliant Andrew Keener production) sounds live. Hearing this prompted me temporarily to abandon both notebook and score for the sheer joy of listening. Elder has the knack of ushering you in among the central workings of a piece. Things I hadn't noticed before were newly but sensibly audible: the *mp* low bassoons at the *Modéré, sans lenteur* passage in i (1'41") and the timpani appoggiaturas at the end of the same movement. Then there are the pizzicato strings beneath the flute (2'33") and the clear-headed handling of the rhythmically complex passage at 4'14", underpinned by the basses. In iii, the fearless horns at 2'25" have real impact, as do the brazen fanfares at 7'05" on what sound like trumpets and

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1932 Paris Cons Orch / Coppola	Dutton Ⓟ CDBP9806 (8/98 ^R)
1948 Orch Stabile Accademia di S Cecilia, Rome / de Sabata	Testament Ⓟ SBT1108 (4/98)
1953 NBC SO / Toscanini	Guild Ⓟ ② GHCD2271/2 (5/54 ^R)
1954 Philh Orch / Cantelli	Warner Ⓟ ⑨ 679043-2 (3/55 ^R)
1956 Boston SO / Munch	Sony Ⓟ ⑤ 88697 48681-2 (12/57 ^R)
1957 Suisse Romande Orch / Ansermet	Decca Eloquence Ⓟ ELQ482 4975
1960 Chicago SO / Reiner	RCA Ⓜ Ⓣ various cat nos (10/61 ^R)
1970 LSO / Stokowski	Decca Ⓟ ⑤ 475 1452CD5 (9/71 ^R)
1977 BPO / Karajan	Warner Ⓟ ③ 9029 57209-0
1978 Orch de Paris / Barenboim	DG Ⓜ 478 3618GM (12/78 ^R)
1989 Montreal SO / Dutoit	Decca Ⓟ ② 460 217-2DF2 (2/91 ^R)
1990 Suisse Romande Orch / A Jordan	Erato Ⓟ ⑪ 9029 59535-3 (11/91 ^R)
1991 Cleveland Orch / Boulez	DG Ⓟ 439 896-2GH (3/95)
2003 Lucerne Fest Orch / Abbado	EuroArts Ⓟ ② 426 4438; DG Ⓜ ② 477 5082GH2 (12/04)
2004 BPO / Rattle	EMI/Warner Ⓟ 558045-2 (10/05)
2006 Hallé Orch / Elder	Hallé Ⓟ CDHLL7513 (5/07)
2007 Lyon Nat Orch / Märkl	Naxos Ⓜ 8 570759; Ⓟ ⑨ 8 509002
2011-12 RSNO / Denève	Chandos Ⓟ ② CHSA5102 (8/12)
2012 Siècles / Roth	Actes Sud Ⓟ ASM10 (9/13)
2017 French Nat Orch / Krivine	Erato Ⓟ 9029 56870-4 (6/18)
2017 Deutsches SO Berlin / Ticciati	Linn Ⓟ CKD550 (A/17)
2018 Philh Orch / Heras-Casado	Harmonia Mundi Ⓟ HMM90 2310 (7/18)

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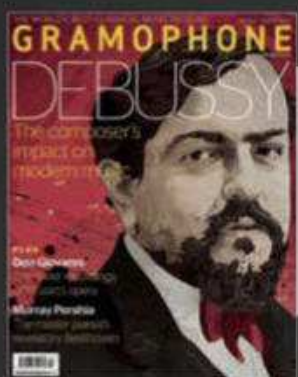
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In his 2006 recording with the Hallé, Elder presents 'a virtual-reality ocean, vivid and atmospheric'

horns. I could go on but will leave you to take my prompt. This intelligently conceived *La mer* is bold, rhythmically propelled and atmospheric, while the recorded sound has impressive presence.

Jun Märkl and the Lyon National Orchestra (2007) parade more virtues than they do shortcomings, the latter of little importance – such as vaguely articulated cellos at 1'43" into i, and at 0'50" in iii a muted trumpet that is surely too quiet for *forte* (the unmuted response soon afterwards is fine). But in general, iii is studded with significant detail, most memorably the gull-like piccolos around 2'57".

In comparison with Märkl's outdoorsy traversal, Sir **Simon Rattle's** live 2004 Berlin Philharmonic take on *La mer* is more a luxury cruise with richly upholstered surroundings, everything you'd have imagined Karajan's 1977 Berlin version to be if you'd never actually heard it. In ii, the waves flirt rather than play, bringing us a few kilometres nearer the world of Debussy's late, erotically charged masterpiece *Jeux* (try 2'28" in). In short, Rattle's *La mer* matches the visceral impact of Abbado's version but lacks its sense of spontaneity. I'd call it comfortably filmic rather than a weathered seascape, although it does have its moments; the sensual balance of strings (very high and low) and woodwind at the *Plus calme et très expressif* (4'22" into iii) is ideally judged.

A profound sense of quiet allied to richness among the pizzicato basses marks the opening of **Robin Ticciati's** vividly recorded *La mer* with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin in 2017 as exceptional. When the lapping string quavers enter at 1'35", Ticciati and his

players honour Debussy's request for flexibility, and where the woodwind and solo violin should 'give a little' soon afterwards, likewise that's precisely what happens. The stormscape finale works wonderfully well, with violins generating a sense of peril by playing near the bridge (at 1'10"), clearly audible bass-drum taps from 1'57" and prominent trumpet fanfares. My only reservation concerns a relative lack of animation among the waves in ii, where *Les Siècles*, the Hallé, the French National Orchestra (see below) and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra generate rather more in the way of playful sea spray. Otherwise, Ticciati's is a memorable and sonically imposing production. As is **Emmanuel Krivine's** idiomatic French National Orchestra recording, also from last year. This one interestingly offers an effectively tightened, even minute, version of the pause around fig 5 in i (2'31") which Ansermet favours on his recordings. Both conductors maximise on flexibility, Krivine's approach to ii suggesting mermaids splashing playfully among the waves. One marvellous moment occurs at 5'56" in ii, where eerie tremolandos on violas and cellos suggest a sense of foreboding that is fully realised in iii, although the *ff* onslaught at 3'09" could have been more powerful. There's also a unique feature on this recording in that Krivine offers both the 1909 revision of *La mer* (which he chose for his almost identically paced earlier (2009) recording with the Luxembourg Philharmonic on the Timpani label) and, on a separate track at the end of the disc, a slice of the original version, in other words 2'15" worth of iii (from bar 5

on p 149 of the Eulenberg score to the end) with the fanfares intact. It's a nice idea, but with a total disc playing time of just 61'14", surely it would have been far preferable to give us the whole movement with the fanfares intact, and place it directly after the 1909 version of iii. As it stands, this fragment follows on from *Images*, which makes little sense. Still, it's an extremely fine performance, vividly recorded; and it's good that listeners can at least check out the alternative versions of the finale for themselves.

In a recording made and released this year, **Pablo Heras-Casado** and the Philharmonia Orchestra offer a dazzling array of varied textures, with crystal-clear *ppp* timps at the beginning of i, a consistently active blend of timbres throughout the whole of ii and an impactful bass drum in iii, the work's grand finale vying with the best for visceral excitement. But as I've suggested elsewhere, the presence of so much simultaneously voiced detail is occasionally distracting, even overwhelming. I frequently felt as if I was being swallowed up by a swiftly incoming tide. Still, it's a very impressive production, there's no doubt about that.

Could it be considered top of the league though? Not really, given the stiff competition. And there are all the others, too: compelling Giulini (with three versions to choose from), Barbirolli, Bernstein, Markevitch and Esa-Pekka Salonen (each with two versions on offer), animated Paray and Martinon, engaging Celibidache (three that I've heard), Yannick Nézet-Séguin (seductive in parts, but imperfectly balanced), Fournet, Solti, Ormandy and so on. But although Abbado, Jordan and Krivine in particular bring us within a hair's breadth of the seaborne ideal, it's Elder and the Hallé who offer the most aurally comprehensive reportage of a masterpiece by a composer who once said, 'There's no need ... for music to make people *think*! ... It would be enough if music could make people *listen*.' And that's precisely what happens with Elder's *La mer*. **G**

TOP CHOICE

Hallé Orchestra / Elder

Hallé © CDHLL7513

From sea spray to thunder, from sunshine to threatening storm clouds, here's a virtual-



reality ocean caught in all her varied moods and colours – vivid, immediate, consistently atmospheric. The score is meticulously observed, but with no compromises.

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live concert and opera performances from around the world, and reviews of archived music-making available online to stream where you want, when you want

Gothenburg Concert Hall & online

Manfred Honeck conducts Shostakovich, August 13

This concert offers a chance to hear one of Sweden's fastest-rising young stars, multi-prizewinning Chinese-Swedish pianist, David Huang. He joins the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Manfred Honeck to perform Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No 1, with Bengt Danielsson as the trumpet soloist. Also on the programme is Bruckner's Seventh. gso.se

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons, Calgary & online

Honens Piano Competition, August 30 - September 8

This major Canada-based competition for pianists aged between 20 and 30 carries a cash first prize of \$100,000CAD plus an artistic development programme valued at half a million dollars. Most importantly from a viewer perspective, though, the list of associated artists is a top-drawer one. For instance, amongst the seven-strong finals and semifinals jury are Inon Barnatan and Ingrid Fliter. Meanwhile artists collaborating onstage with the participants include the baritone Benjamin Appl, and Karina Canellakis conducting

the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. The Semifinals and Finals will be streamed live at honens.com and cbcmusic.ca. The Finals will also be broadcast on medici.tv. honens.com, medici.tv

Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg & online

Gautier Capuçon plays Dvořák, August 31

The Elbphilharmonie is streaming a few great concerts around the end of August, including Heinz Karl Gruber with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, so it's worth having a look at their website. We're particularly drawing your attention to this visit from the Mahler Youth Orchestra under Lorenzo Viotti, though, because it looks like a cracker: Gautier Capuçon joins them for Dvořák's Cello Concerto, flanked by Verdi's Overture to *La forza del destino*, Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. elbphilharmonie.de

Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg & online

Opening Night and Season's Opening concerts, September 1 & 2

'What's the difference between Opening Night and Season's Opening?', we hear you ask. Well, the former is a recent tradition for an NDR 'Opening Night' established by outgoing

Principal Conductor Thomas Hengelbrock, while the latter comes under the banner of HamburgMusik, the corporation founded by City of Hamburg around a decade ago to oversee all artistic activities in the newly-built Elbphilharmonie. As for what's on offer on these two opening nights, the answer is lots of good stuff. For the NDR Opening Night, Jean-Yves Thibaudet joins the orchestra under their Principal Guest Conductor Krzysztof Urbanski for a predominantly Ravel programme: the G major Piano Concerto, *Daphnis et Chloé* fragments, *Boléro*, then a modern French work in the form of Guillaume Connesson's *Les Trois Cités de Lovecraft*. The Season Opening concert meanwhile sees Sir John Eliot Gardiner conduct his Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Joyce DiDonato in an all-Berlioz programme culminating in the *Symphonie fantastique*. elbphilharmonie.de

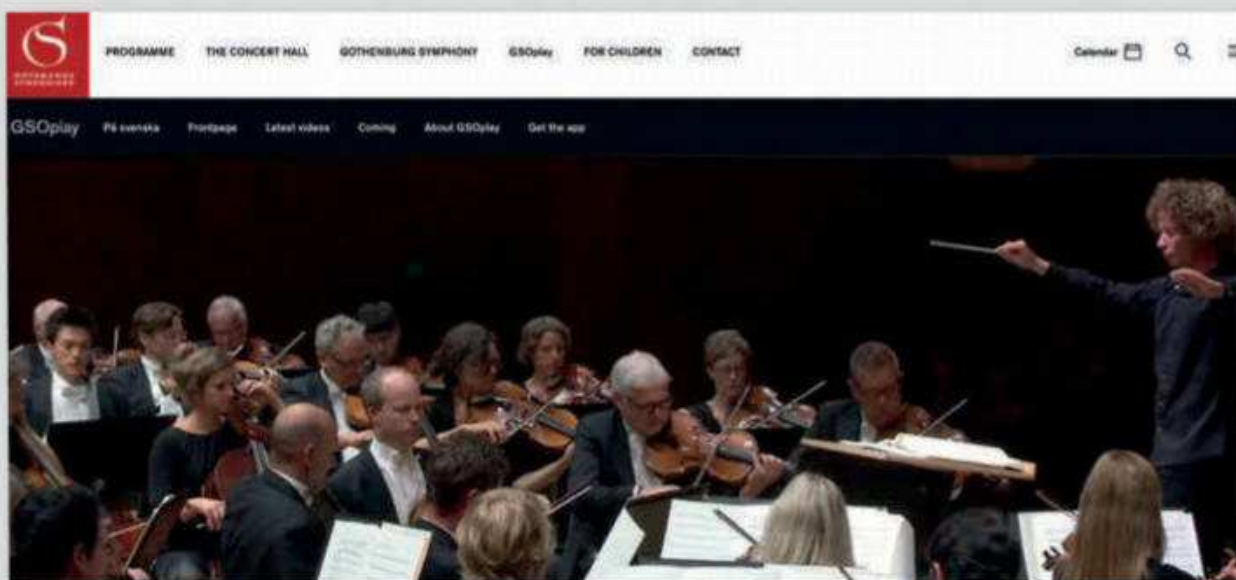
Amsterdam Concertgebouw Main Hall & online

Netherlands Radio Choir sing famous Italian opera choruses, September 2

The Amsterdam Concertgebouw's first Sunday Morning Concert of the new season is a suitably celebratory affair, with the Netherlands

ONLINE OPERA REVIEW

Seldom-heard Sibelius from the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra's dynamic and youthful Principal Conductor



Sibelius

It's not often we get to hear *The Wood Nymph*, Sibelius's long-lost tone poem based on verses by his beloved Viktor Rydberg. The piece probably tells us more about the hypnotic delivery of Finland's traditional rune singers than any other from Sibelius's pen; it stays uncannily still

across its various scenes, turning tiny modulations into major events and exploring the sort of inner, repetitive developmental techniques that would be taken forward by the American minimalists.

This is a remarkable performance of the score, shot a few weeks before Santtu-Matias Rouvali assumed the Principal

Conductorship of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in September 2017. Rouvali understands the music's layers, its need for buoyancy and the implications of its smallest gestures.

Those familiar with Rouvali's conducting style will know he does a mean impression of a 1980s TV magician. But the drama he creates – as when seguing straight from the drumroll that ends *The Wood Nymph* into *En saga* – is often real. This is another strong performance built from the bottom-up and full of shamanistic atmosphere. There are some wobbles in the fragmentary central episodes but when the juggernaut gets going again for the last time it's unusually thrilling. Let's hope both these revealing works will appear on Rouvali's forthcoming Sibelius cycle with the orchestra. **Andrew Mellor**

Available to view, free of charge, until August 20 at gso.se

Radio Choir singing Italian operatic favourites. Verdi dominates the programme, with extracts from *La traviata*, *Aida*, *Il trovatore*, *Nabucco* and *Macbeth*. Accompanying them are the Philharmonic Radio Orchestra under Giancarlo Andretta, who themselves do solo turns with various overtures and Mascagnini's Intermezzo from *Cavalleria rusticana*.
concertgebouw.nl/en/live-streams

Grieghallen, Bergen

Bergen Phil Season Opening concert, September 6

It's looking like a particularly tip-top season opener from the Bergen Philharmonic and Edward Gardner this year, not least due to the first work on their programme: the world premiere of Norwegian composer Ørjan Matre's *Different Stories*. The must-hears then continue with Lars Vogt joining them for Britten's Piano Concerto, before they round things off with Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.
bergenphillive.no

Fryderyk Chopin Museum Concert Hall, Warsaw & online

1st International Chopin Competition on Period Instruments, September 2-14

Launched by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute to coincide with the anniversary of Poland's regaining independence, this brand new competition is centred on period keyboard performance. It's a starry jury too, including such names as Nikolai Demidenko, Nelsen Goerner and Andreas Staier. There are three rounds, throughout which participants will have access to a selection of period and period-copy Erards, Pleyels, a Broadwood, and other period instruments. In the third round final, the six finalists will perform Chopin *concertante* works of their choice with the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. The competition runs in collaboration with Polish Television and Polish Radio. It's also being streamed internationally by the Institute.
en.chopin.nifc.pl, iccpi.eu

Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

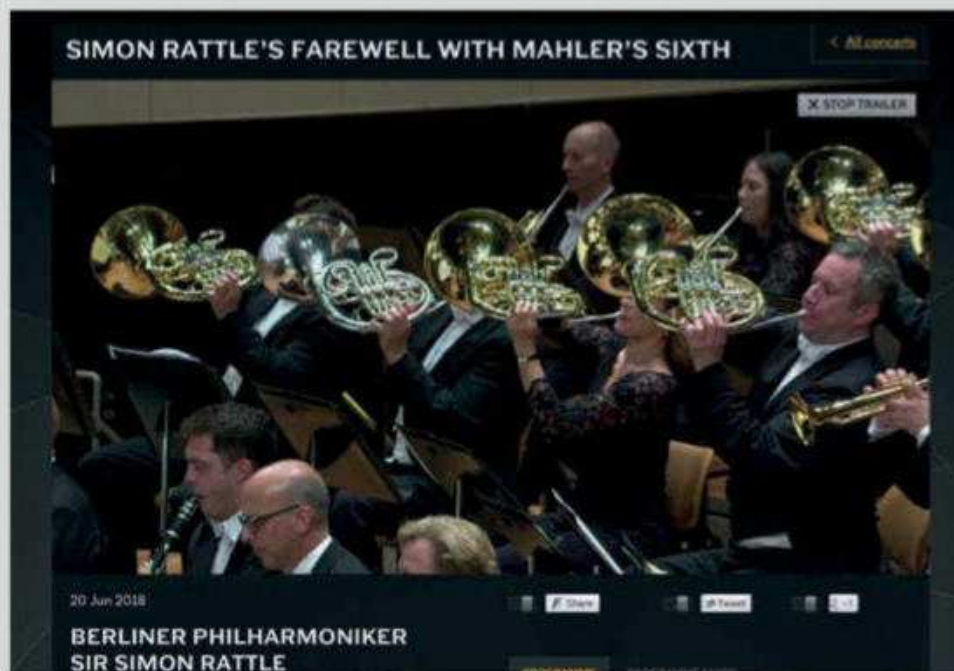
Glyndebourne in Liverpool, September 9

Here's a rare chance for music lovers in Northern England to get a little bit of the Glyndebourne experience, because although this is a film screening, everyone gets a free glass of champagne on arrival, and there's also an hour-long interval to allow for picnics. As for what's actually on the screen, it's Michael Grandage's acclaimed production of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, filmed live at Glyndebourne in 2012. Robin Ticciati conducts a cast featuring Vito Priante as Figaro, Lydia Teuscher as Susanna, Sally Matthews as the Countess, Audun Iversen as the Count, and Isabel Leonard as Cherubino.

liverpoolphil.com

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Sir Simon Rattle leaves Berlin as he started - with Mahler's Sixth Symphony



succeeding *Andante* of sickly nostalgia and (death to Mahler's music) irony. Not only is the symphony's strong formal Classicism emphasised by drawing out any tragic forebodings, but Rattle's strategy – and the Berliners' execution –

Mahler

Our beginnings never know our endings, remarked Harold Pinter. Few could have foreseen in November 1987, when Simon Rattle made his debut with the Berlin Philharmonic in Mahler's Sixth Symphony, that over 30 years later he would say farewell to the orchestra, now as its Music Director, with the same work.

Pinter's aperçu has wider ramifications in this context. Too many Sixths start out with their destiny writ large, including that 1987 concert, briefly available on CD. Not this one. Not only in the accompanying interview does Rattle make the most persuasive of cases for the composer's first thoughts on the order of the inner movements. Ending the first movement in a spirit of real elation unburdens the

lends light and vigour as well as growing unease to the phantasmagorical lurchings of the Scherzo.

Living the symphony as if for the first time is hard to achieve as listeners, harder still for performers. Yet only minute by minute in the titanic finale, here tautened by Rattle over his previous accounts, does it become evident that the struggle will be an unequal one. Even with the hammer-blows of fate signposted from a distance by the camera, they assert a Romantic identity for the symphony as a life-and-death journey in the here and now, one in which contrasting drives are held on this occasion in nigh-perfect balance. **Peter Quantrill**

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The Leeds International Piano Competition Second round September 6-8, semi-finals September 9-11

Under the joint artistic direction of Paul Lewis and Adam Gatehouse, 'The Leeds' has suddenly cranked up its game to truly international proportions. Open to pianists aged between 20 and 29, First Prize includes a concerto appearance with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic under Vasily Petrenko on the opening night of their season, plus others with the Hallé and the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, solo recital appearances including at Wigmore Hall and Southbank Centre, a major recording deal with Warner Classics, and mentoring from Paul Lewis and other jury members (the jury includes Imogen Cooper, Lars Vogt and Shai Wosner). Furthermore, Askonas Holt will offer artistic management to one of the three prize-winners of their choice. The competition's second round and the semi-finals, along with the previous stages of the competition, are being live streamed on **medici.tv**. You can also

catch the semi-finals and finals on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Four TV.

leedspiano.com, medici.tv, bbc.co.uk/radio3

Tiroler Landeskonservatorium & live on YouTube

Cesti Competition Final, August 24

Founded in 2010, this international Baroque singing competition sits within the Innsbrucker Festwochen der Alte Musik, and offers a mix of cash prizes, and engagements; and indeed the final round's required repertoire is based on one of those engagements: arias from Handel's *Ottone, re di Germania*, the 2019 festival's Barockoper:Jung production. This is a competition jury that all young baroque singers would want to be in front of too with representatives from Zurich Opera, the Händel Festspiele Göttingen, Theater an der Wien, Wiener Konzerthaus Handel Festival Halle and Opera Bordeaux. You can find the live stream of the final on the competition's website.

altemusik.at/live

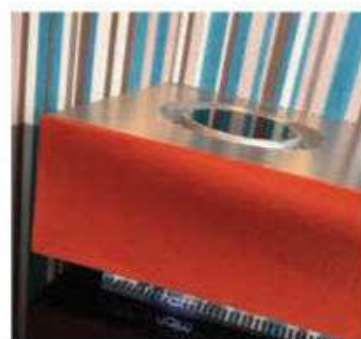
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Classic revivals? A new heavyweight CD player from Japan and the latest update of a famous budget amplifier. Plus: what price luxury?

Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

SEPTEMBER TEST DISCS



A dynamic set of Bernstein favourites with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Christian Lindberg in vibrant 96kHz/24-bit sound.



Beautifully poised and detailed, this Haydn recording by Trio Wanderer benefits from the enhanced resolution of the 96kHz/24-bit release.

Is this a classic reborn?

An amplifier that harks back to an influential design from the past, built purely for music lovers

The old saying says that 'What goes around comes around' and there's more than an air of that about the products reviewed this month. We have the latest version of an amplifier that set the world abuzz four decades ago and a return to heavyweight, high-performance disc playback from Pioneer (see page 134).

Pioneer has piqued the interest with the arrival of its latest affordable amplifier, the £400 A-40AE **1**. Said to be designed to 'appeal both to newcomers to audio and experienced audiophiles alike', with 'a comprehensive range of features, high quality components, superlative workmanship and a crisp, well-defined sound', the new model immediately called to mind another classic amplifier of the past, Pioneer's A-400.

That was a stripped-out model, while the newcomer has a built-in Wolfson DAC supporting both optical and coaxial digital inputs as well as tone controls. The A-40AE also has a number of audiophile features, including a 'Power Amp Direct' function for use with external pre-amps or processors, a bypass function for those tone controls, five line inputs and a moving magnet phono stage for use with a turntable, and two sets of speaker outputs, connected in parallel to simplify the biwiring of suitable speakers. The amp uses a high-rigidity steel chassis and aluminium front panel, while the power supply includes ELNA capacitors custom-made for Pioneer. Is this a classic amplifier design reborn? We'll have to wait to hear it in action but the signs are promising.

Also new from Pioneer is a pair of 9.2-channel AV receivers designed to deliver 3D surround formats including



Dolby Atmos and DTS:X. The £800 VSX-LX303 and £1000 VSX-LX503 feature extensive network music streaming facilities, including DSD up to 11.2MHz and 192kHz/24-bit PCM-based music, and have Bluetooth, Flare Connect, Chromecast and DTS Play-Fi connectivity. Similar functionality is available from two models from Pioneer stablemate Onkyo, the £900 TX-RZ730 and £1100 TZ-RZ830 **2**, the latter having a Pure Audio mode for optimal performance when playing music. Like the Pioneers, the two new Onkyos are available now.

Astell & Kern is refreshing its range with new models in two line-ups, designated A&norma and A&futura **3** and slotting in below the A&Ultimate SP100 model. The new contender is the A&norma SR15, which uses a Cirrus Logic DAC to play files at up to 192kHz/24-bit and DSD64/2.8MHz, while the A&futura SE100 uses the ESS SABRE ES9038Pro DAC. This allows four channels of conversion each for left and right channels, delivering what's claimed to be excellent signal-to-noise ratio and allowing the machine to handle up to 32-bit/384kHz PCM audio and native playback of Quad DSD.

UK pricing is yet to be set for those two models but the company is also launching its Billie Jean earphones **4**, the latest in its Siren series named after women in song titles. The earphones are engineered by Jerry Harvey, who has designed in-ear monitors for performers including the



Rolling Stones. They have a dual balanced armature design with an internal Acoustic Chamber Sound Bore to give a wider sound stage. They'll sell for £299.

Multiroom speakers designed to sound good anywhere in the room come from Dynaudio, with its prosaically named Music series **5**. The four models each feature the company's Room Adapt technology, which senses where in the room the speaker is placed and adapts the sound accordingly, and NoiseAdapt to maintain clarity even in noisy environments. There are also five presets, programmable to select playlists, internet radio stations and so on, for instant access. Sources include Wi-Fi, aptX Bluetooth and Apple AirPlay. All the speakers are fully active, with a separate Class D amplifier for each driver: the entry-level Music 1, selling for £450, uses two 40W amps and, like the Music 3 (£575), which uses three 40W amps, is battery or mains powered, with up to eight hours' battery life between charges. The £700 Music 5 uses five 50W amplifiers, while the Music 7 (£875) has six. Both of these models are mains-only and the Music 7 has an HDMI input with Audio Return Channel capability, allowing it to be used as a TV soundbar. Up to six Music series speakers can be used together, controlled by the Dynaudio Music app. **6**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Pioneer PD-70AE

Pioneer launches high-end SACD/CD player – is this another ‘your last CD player’ contender?

My friend was confused. ‘Yes, but what else does it do?’ she asked, as I dropped a Super Audio CD into the loading drawer of the Pioneer PD-70AE. It seems we’ve got too used to players that are also network streamers or computer audio DACs or pre-amps or even complete systems, to the point where a machine that just plays discs is something of an oddity.

Yet that’s just what the PD-70AE, which sells for £2199, is. OK, it has digital inputs on the rear, allowing external sources to be connected to its digital-to-analogue conversion section, but they’re of the old-school optical and coaxial kind. There’s not a sniff of an asynchronous USB input for your computer, let alone an Ethernet port to allow streaming over a network; there’s not even anywhere to plug in USB storage to play music; and you’ll hunt in vain for an app to control it from your phone or tablet.

There’s not a sniff of an asynchronous USB input, an Ethernet port, anywhere to plug in USB storage to play music or an app to control it

Instead, you get a solid, heftily built player – it weighs 18kg – totally optimised to make the most of discs, be they standard CDs or the Super Audio kind. In that it builds on a long heritage of excellent CD players from the company, from the massive heavyweight – even heavier than this! – machines mainly sold into the Japanese high-end market in the past. Pioneer has also been known for its



PIONEER PD-70AE

Type SACD/CD player

Price £2199

Disc formats played SACD, CD, CD-R/RW, DVD-R/RW, DVD+R/RW

File formats played Up to 192kHz/24-bit and DSD5.6/128 from DVD+/-R/RW, up to 48kHz/24-bit from CD-R/RW, up to 192kHz/24bit via digital inputs

Digital inputs Optical/coaxial

Digital output Optical/coaxial

Analogue outputs Unbalanced (RCA phono), balanced (XLR)

Other connections Pioneer control in/out

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43.5x14.2x41.3cm
pioneer-audiovisual.eu



innovations in CD playback, such as its Stable Platter Mechanism players, which loaded the disc label-side-down on a miniature turntable complete with a rubber

mat and read it from above, and its famous Legato Link conversion system, which used an extrapolation algorithm in an attempt to ‘put back’ some of the audio information

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The PD-70AE is heard best when using its balanced outputs. The Rotel RA-1572 amplifier will suit well and offer effortless power.



GUSTARD U12

If you want to connect your computer to the Pioneer via USB, the cost-effective Gustard U12 digital interface is just the thing.



lost by the brickwall filtering just above 20kHz used in the mastering of CDs.

The PD-70AE we have here is built round a pair of the well-respected ESS Sabre 9026PRO digital-to-analogue converters, regarded as one of the lowest-distortion chipsets on the market, and here used in dual-mono configuration to service the fully balanced design of the player right through the analogue section to the XLR outputs (with RCA unbalanced outputs also provided using a little rear-panel on/off switch to take them out of circuit when balanced working is available). Internally the player is built in discrete blocks, right back to separate power supply transformers for the analogue and digital sections, thus allowing both power supply and audio signal paths to be kept as short as possible. And custom capacitors are used, these having been selected via extensive listening tests.


Mechanically the build is just as impressive, the player sitting on a heavy Rigid Under Base itself supported by damped feet, while the disc transport is isolated in its own shielded case, of a honeycomb structure for rigidity and treated with a vibration-damping paint. This is mounted on a rigid aluminium base with extra damping to keep as much vibration as possible at bay, thus enabling the laser pickup to get on with its job to the best of its ability.

PERFORMANCE

The trick up the sleeve of this player is that, as well as handling SACD and CD media, it can also play a variety of music formats stored on recordable discs. Using CD-R/RW, DVD-R/RW or DVD+R/RW discs, it can play MP3/WMA/AAC files and FLAC, WAV, AIFF and ALAC at up to 48kHz/24-bit, while the DVD variants can also be used to store and play those lossless formats at up to 192kHz/24-bit, as well as DSD2.8/64 and DSD5.6/128. Of course this is less convenient than having a direct computer hook-up or a USB input socket but both recordable DVD media and USB DVD writers are relatively inexpensive: you can buy a 'pancake' of 50 DVD-R discs for less than £10, while a USB DVD writer for your computer will cost you around £20 or so.

For the testing of the player I thus used both commercial SACD and CD releases and 'home-burnt' DVD media, as well as connecting my computer to the Pioneer via the £156 Gustard U12 interface (which, among other things, converts USB to a coaxial digital output), and spent some time experimenting with the PD-70AE's switchable digital filter and adjustable digital lock range. I found the effect of both of these settings marginal enough to be a matter of personal taste, although the 'slow' filter setting can inject some warmth into the sound if required. The digital filters have no effect when playing SACDs or DSD files but it's still worth using the 'direct' mode – which turns off the display and digital output – for the clearest sound.

The Pioneer is both clear and detailed, with a mightily powerful sound that really brings out the scale and three-dimensionality of a performance. Its ability to create a broad, deep sound stage with large orchestral works is heard to good effect with recordings such as the recent Vienna SO/Philippe Jordan recording of Beethoven's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies (Wiener Symphoniker, 6/18), where the impression of the orchestra ranged back beyond the speakers is very noticeable. The power and drive of the recent RLPO/Christian Lindberg set of Bernstein pieces is handled beautifully by the Pioneer, which shows subtlety in the handling of the quieter passages of the *West Side Story* Symphonic Dances, then explodes into action when required (6/18). Also beyond doubt is the focus and micro-dynamic ability here. Playing some of the 2L label's beautifully recorded SACDs, the sense of presence, of being in the room with the performance, is thrillingly created, as is the enveloping acoustic of the recorded venue.

There are those who will tell you that the physical disc is on its last legs and that streaming is the future. The superb performance of the PD-70AE is sufficient to dispel that myth by delivering state-of-the-art sound from discs, whether commercially released or burnt at home from ripped or downloaded files. By any standards, this player is a major achievement from a company with an enviable reputation in disc playback. 

Or you could try...

Despite the speculation about the demise of the CD, there's no shortage of high-quality disc-playback hardware still available, with good machines starting from well under £500.

Naim CD 5si

However, if you want a top-notch CD-only player, look no further than the simple, functional and great-sounding Naim CD 5si, at little more than half the price of the Pioneer, with its swing-out loader housing the complete disc mechanism and a magnetic puck to hold your CD in place. For more details of this purist solution, see naimaudio.com.



Roksan Caspian M2

Selling for around the same price as the Pioneer, Roksan's Caspian M2 CD player is a long-established design, with a unique look and high-quality internal construction including a decoupled disc transport and a separate analogue output stage. More information at roksan.co.uk.



Marantz SA 10

Moving into the super-high-end arena, the Marantz SA 10 is the finest player the company has ever made, with both CD and SACD playback in the hands of an all-new transport mechanism and a novel digital section based around Marantz expertise in the handling of DSD signals. By upsampling all inputs to quad-DSD – the player also has a full suite of digital ins – the Marantz can simplify the output stage to nothing more than a low-pass filter, as you can discover at marantz.co.uk.



Esoteric K-07X

And if the £5000 Marantz isn't rich enough for you, the luxurious Esoteric K-07X player is another SACD/CD machine with digital inputs, and upsampling available if required. It's an unashamedly luxurious design with a price just north of £7000; but if even that's not enough, this is by no means the most upmarket Esoteric player, as you'll find at esoteric.jp.



● REVIEW NAD D 3020 V2

The little amplifier that does a lot

NAD's revised compact amplifier builds on a classic design with unique style to become an even more tempting prospect for a modern system

For many listeners, NAD's 3020 amplifier was their first taste of real hi-fi. Launched at the end of the 1970s, it was a marked contrast to the (mainly Japanese) amplifiers popular at the time, which tended to be bedecked with facilities and controls required to access them, and played heavily on looking glitzy and 'technical'. The NAD looked sombre in its off-black matt finish, which appeared grey to some eyes and dark brown/green to others, while its controls were simple square black push-buttons and matching knobs, arrayed in a single line across the fascia. Of course, the original 3020, which went on to sell in seven-figure numbers – something unheard of these days – wasn't completely shorn of features. It had a built-in phono stage (as it predated the introduction of the CD), tone controls, a loudness button and even flashing LEDs to indicate the power output. If someone at NAD had designed this product, selling for less than £100, as the perfect student amplifier – which I think they probably did – they couldn't have got it much more right.

As relaunched some five years ago, marking the company's 40th anniversary, the D 3020 was a much more compact design, built to sit on the smallest shelf or, if required, stand on end to take up even less space. Stand it up and the single control knob, for volume, gave it a slightly strange Cyclopean look, ensuring it was just as much of a talking point as the original amplifier.

Half a decade on, the amplifier has been updated to create the D 3020 V2 and, aside from some improvements under the skin, the way the specification has changed speaks volumes for how the usually on-the-ball NAD designers see the hi-fi market changing. The first-generation D 3020 had a USB input for the connection of a computer's audio output; the V2 has dispensed with that facility and replaced it with a high-quality moving magnet phono stage for a turntable, said by the company to have 'highly accurate RIAA equalisation, an Infrasonic Warp Filter, and both high overload margins and extremely low noise'. Clearly NAD doesn't view this as just a sop to fashion. Other inputs run to a single set of analogue line-ins plus coaxial electrical and optical digital, while the amplifier also



NAD D 3020 V2

Type Integrated amplifier

Price £399

Inputs Moving magnet phono, line, optical/coaxial digital, Bluetooth with aptX

Outputs One pair of speakers, headphone, pre-out, subwoofer

Power output 30W per channel into 4/8 ohms

Accessories supplied Mono 3.5mm-to-phono adapter for subwoofer output, remote handset

Dimensions (WxHxD) 5.8x18.6x21.9cm

nadelectronics.com

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provides Bluetooth with aptX to allow computers, phones and tablets to play music to it wirelessly. The digital inputs are served by an eight-channel 192kHz/24-bit DAC, with the channels mixed down to stereo to provide superior performance by rejecting spurious noise and that generated during conversion.

There are no tone controls here, just a rear-panel button to give 6db bass boost if required; while, along with the single set of speaker terminals, outputs are provided for a subwoofer on a 3.5mm socket with a phono socket adaptor provided. There's also a pre-out feed for an external power amp – this is on a 3.5mm stereo socket but you'll have to provide your own adaptor to take advantage of this – and a headphone socket on the front panel. A remote control handset is also provided and the amplifier can also learn the volume, mute and

power commands of a TV remote control, which could be handy if using it to deliver TV sound.

PERFORMANCE

The best news about the D 3020 V2 is that it sells for £50 less than its predecessor, at just £399. Despite what looks like a modest 30W-per-channel output, it still has the wide-ranging speaker-driving capability long a feature of NAD amps. That's thanks to customised Hypex amplifier modules developed by Director of Advanced Technology Bjorn Erik Edvardsen – who designed the original 3020 amplifier all those years ago – which mean the amp can claim instantaneous peak power of 150W. Not bad for a package weighing just 1.4kg.

This is a little amplifier more than willing to play its socks off without any sign of distress

So it proves when the NAD is connected up to a pair of speakers. This is a little amplifier more than willing to play its socks off without any sign of distress, while still delivering a sound combining detail and focus with warmth and richness, meaning that it always sounds both entirely listenable and musically fulfilling. Yes, you can push it to its limits should you choose to play your music at ridiculous levels, but all that happens is that the amplifier simply stops getting any louder, rather than the sound breaking up or becoming strained.

It's as impressive when playing music via its phono stage or line input as it is with digital sources, with only the Bluetooth feed sounding a little parched; but then that's the case with every connection of this kind I have tried. For the money, it does an excellent job of getting to the heart of the music played, be that a small-scale work or some more heavyweight orchestral music.

The size of the NAD might suggest this is an amplifier best suited for small room/second-room use. Nevertheless, while it has undeniable student appeal and will work well in first-time systems, just like its illustrious predecessor, it also shares the 3020 bloodline's ability to punch way above its weight and work in a much wider range of set-ups. **G**

● ESSAY

Is luxury hi-fi relevant?

The annual High End show lived up to its name with plenty of pricey equipment. Is there anything wrong with that?

As predicted in last month's Audio Essay, the annual High End show in Munich kicked off with no shortage of 'Have you heard ...?', to the point that much of the discussion on the press day was not of new product launches but concerned behind-the-scenes machinations. The main conversations were about two well-known British brands finding new owners: the venerable Garrard name, along with Loricraft (which has been servicing and restoring the classic idler-wheel turntables for many years), is now part of SME, which launched its first integrated turntable at the show in the form of the Synergy. It's an all-new motor unit combined with the SME Series IV tonearm, Ortofon's 'exclusive series' MC Windfeld Ti cartridge and a specially designed Nagra phono stage, with monocrystal silver wire by Crystal Cable, and is about as close as you can get to a 'plug and play' SME turntable. On sale from September, it's expected to retail for £14,950.

Another talking point was the news that Musical Fidelity has been bought by Audio Tuning, the Austrian-based company sharing ownership and a factory in the Czech Republic with Pro-ject. Production equipment has already moved to that factory, with Audio Tuning CEO Heinz Lichtenegger saying: 'I will relish the opportunity of expanding the Musical Fidelity brand and continue developing its design and heritage DNA. I am brimming with ideas for new products and ways of exploiting the brand's enviable heritage.'

Talk, too, of moves at Bowers & Wilkins: there had been fears of the effects of its parent company's plan to centralise all its R&D in California but now it has announced a new research and development centre at Southwater, up the A24 from its Worthing factory in West Sussex. The new facility, which opens later this year and will replace the famous Steyning R&D facility, will offer expanded space and enhanced facilities, with 'multiple anechoic chambers, significant increase in the number of listening test rooms, a suite of product testing and engineering labs, and dedicated Headphone and Automotive Audio Labs.' In addition, and 'in recognition of the incredible legacy of John Bowers, it will also feature a near recreation of his original listening room to

ensure that our sound remains true to his vision. [It] will also feature an experience centre designed to showcase the product ranges to partners, press and visitors alike.'

Meanwhile, back in the halls of the High End show, you could be forgiven for thinking that all the action was in the realm of the super-rich, with big-ticket product launches seemingly at every turn. Just to scratch the surface of the high-end – and huge – speakers launched at the show, we saw a new Confidence range from Danish company Dynaudio, a high-end Fact Fenestria model from Britain's PMC and the truly huge Grande Utopia Evo from France's Focal.

Back in the halls, you could be forgiven for thinking that all the action was in the realm of the super-rich

In the case of the Dynaudio and Focal models, the news was improved components for enhanced performance, as is usual with such developments – and a 180kg speaker with prices running close to €200,000 in the French company's case – but the PMC speaker, its largest 'domestic' model, is all-new, the result of plenty of 'clean sheet' research and development by the small team led by Oliver Thomas. Drawing on his past experience with the Red Bull F1 team, where he worked on electronics but clearly got a working knowledge of all the aerodynamic tricks, Thomas's design makes use of the same Laminair vents at the opening of its Advanced Transmission Lines seen in the company's twenty25 speaker range.

There the similarity ends. The speaker uses no fewer than four bass drivers in two stacked cabinets, the upper one inverted to put the Laminair vents top and bottom of the speaker, while the new mid-range and treble drivers are floated on an aluminium section in the centre and thus freed from the vibrations of all that bass energy. Another novel aspect of the design is that the side panels of the cabinet are decoupled from the main enclosure, acting as tuned mass dampers to tackle spurious energy. Yes, it's a £45,000/pr speaker and thus unashamedly luxurious; but one could easily see at least some of the technology



Above: SME-Synergy, Dynaudio, PMC Fenestria, Focal GUtopia Evo, Finkteam Borg Bild 65, Atlas Luxe cables and the D'Agostino amplifier

in this statement design trickling down to more affordable models in the future.

And that idea of trickle-down was also in evidence in the new speaker from German company Finkteam. Having shown its huge WM-4 speakers at previous shows, this year it was back with an altogether more domestically acceptable model called Borg, combining an AMT tweeter with a large 25cm mid/bass unit. Remarkable for the way these two drivers have been knitted together to deliver a seamless sound, the €24,000/pr speaker incorporates a number of adjustments to tune the sound to the room and the user's tastes. The company is already thought to be eyeing even smaller designs for the near future – not to mention incorporating some of the learning from this design into future models for its clients.

That's not to say there weren't some products of sheer luxury. One of the best known names in US high-end audio, Dan D'Agostino, launched his massive Relentless monobloc amplifier, using 'roughly 100 output devices' to produce an output of 1500W into 8 ohms, and no less than 6000W into a 2 ohm load. Weighing 200kg, the amp is officially listed as 'price on application', but the indications are that a pair will set you back around £275,000.

Just occasionally one comes across something that has one shaking the head and asking 'Why?' That came in the form of the new Luxe finish available on selected products from Atlas Cables. For prices starting at £225 per metre, you can have your cables sheathed in hand-stitched nappa leather in Ebony, Brogue, Ivory and Daytona Red, with a choice of cross stitch and baseball stitch options. No sonic benefit whatsoever is claimed for the new finish. **G**



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Giltburg's Rach 3

What interesting and astute considerations were raised at the start of Patrick Rucker's review of Boris Giltburg's recording of Rachmaninov's Third Concerto (7/18). On the strength of his subsequent recommendation I purchased the disc and am not disappointed.

This is one of a handful of works which fall into my 'obsessive' category and I was pleased to add to the 20 or so other recordings I already have. For me the extremes are on the one hand Cliburn with Kondrashin – haunted by wall-to-wall melancholy – and on the other Trpčeski with Petrenko – imbued with a deep faith and optimism throughout. Trpčeski suggests the sort of performance Josef Hoffmann might have given had he taken the concerto on. And has anyone judged the tempo at the very start to such a nicety as these two do?

John Ball
Beckenham

Percussion din?

I read with some interest your article on percussion (8/18). I have heard many works for percussion, performed by such performers as Dame Evelyn Glennie and Colin Currie (both of whom I have met). However, at the end of the day, the works they perform remind me of the great singer and comedian Anna Russell in her lecture on the percussion instruments of the orchestra, where she described them as being 'anything that is aggressed upon'. No matter how clever and athletic these performers may be, Anna Russell was right.

Leslie Austin
New Zealand

Budapest's Beethoven

I am deeply grateful to Rob Cowan for his tip about the release at long last of Sony's marvellous recording of the Budapest Quartet's 1951-52 Beethoven cycle (Replay, 8/18). I first came across this in 1963 as a student, immediately acquiring the Philips version of Opp 131 and 135, and a good deal later (because they were by then 'out of print') a second-hand Op 132: an early 33rpm pressing, almost twice the weight and thickness of the sixties LPs. Reading in Rob Cowan's review that the new individual discs come in facsimiles of

Letter of the Month

The art of Julia Varady on screen

Further to Richard Fairman's excellent feature on Julia Varady, (Icons, 8/18), including a lovely photo of her as Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, it is indeed very sad that there is virtually no legacy of her art on DVD demonstrating that she was one of the finest lyric-dramatic sopranos of the last quarter of the 20th century.

Fortunately two of her greatest Wagner roles were recorded complete, but only on VHS tape and laser disc: Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer* (1992) and Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* (1989), both conducted in Munich by Wolfgang Sawallisch. In my view she is unsurpassed in these performances and both are long overdue for reissue on DVD/Blu-ray. Her Donna Elvira under Karajan from Salzburg in 1987 is currently the only DVD available of her in a complete opera.

Fortunately you can see her in a wonderful DVD called 'Song of Passion' (EMI) which profiles her career and includes video extracts from most of her major roles, including



Julia Varady: under-represented on DVD

rehearsing Abigaille in *Nabucco* from Paris in 1995 and singing with husband and coach Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau in *Il Tabarro* in 1974 and in *Arabella* in 1977. A very frustrating DVD because the extracts are so short, but an absolutely essential purchase which shows her range and greatness.

Geoff Hunt
London

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the original jackets, I was shocked to find on their sleeves an Afro-haired Beethoven scrawled on a kind of Wanted poster: the original Columbia Masterworks jacket. The heavily glowering Beethoven bust on the covers of the old Philips LPs was no match for the brilliance and delicacy of the recordings, but the Columbia image is a period absurdity. Still, wonderful to have the recordings, very much 'wanted' in another sense.

John Worthen
Cambridge

Bruckner-Wagner coupling

Perhaps the coupling of Bruckner's Symphony No 7 with Siegfried's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung* is not quite as 'bizarre' as Richard Osborne suggests in

his review of Andris Nelsons's recording (7/18). After all, it was this symphony that was played on German radio to accompany the announcement of Hitler's death.

David Woodhead
Surrey

The future of labels

In the August issue's Editorial you make an important point about the value of record labels as curators of quality recordings. My personal favourite is Nonesuch which covers a fairly wide range of genres yet I can be confident any release will be interesting.

I don't believe this value has to be lost with the decline of physical recordings. The market is in a state of flux and the predominance of streaming isn't

necessarily the endpoint. Labels should be looking for ways to continue their role in new formats – perhaps special playlists bundling music in a way that is more flexible than is possible with CDs. In my business experience, radical change creates opportunities for those quick on their feet and I hope some people in the record

industry are thinking creatively about the opportunities and are not just bemoaning what is happening to the market.

Gramophone can encourage that creative thinking and I think your piece is a good starting point.

Ken Nielsen
Sydney, Australia

OBITUARIES

A noted musicologist; a dedicated journalist and organist

FRANZ BEYER

Musicologist and viola player

Born February 26, 1922

Died June 29, 2018



The German musicologist has died aged 96. He is best known for his completion of Mozart's Requiem, published in 1971. Following on from

the completion by Süssmayr, Mozart's pupil, Beyer's is notable for its lighter textures, particularly in the wind parts. Beyer also attempted to eliminate Süssmayr's errors, while acknowledging the debt owed to him in preventing the work from being lost for ever.

Beyer was born in Weingarten, south-west Germany, and became a music student in nearby Stuttgart. He trained as a viola player and joined the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra. He was also a member of the Strub Quartet, a leading post-war German string quartet.

From 1962 to 1995, Beyer was professor of viola and chamber music at the Munich Hochschule für Musik und Theater. He had already shown an interest in making arrangements of other composers' music while in Stuttgart, but his studies were interrupted by the Second World War; after a concert in the 1960s he suggested to Bruno Walter that he improve upon Süssmayr's edition and Walter urged him to go ahead. The result, wrote David Threasher in these pages (11/17), 'follows the contour of the traditional version, correcting Süssmayr's most egregious solecisms and extending the stumpy "Osanna" fugues with brief homophonic codas'. This version, DT continues, 'has enjoyed conspicuous success, being favoured by the likes of Marriner, Harnoncourt, Abbado and Bernstein'.

Beyer went on to make more than 150 revisions and completions of pieces by more than 20 composers, as well as writing cadenzas for all three of Haydn's

surviving violin concertos. In addition, for the bicentenary of Mozart's death in 1991, he published a completed version of the C minor Mass (1989) and several arrangements of his chamber music.

As a viola player, Beyer appeared on several recordings of Mozart's music, including two of the string quintets with the Melos Quartet for DG.

BASIL RAMSEY

Organist and writer

Born April 26, 1929

Died June 13, 2018



Basil Ramsey, the organist, journalist and publisher, has died aged 89. In 1999, Ramsey established the online music magazine *Music & Vision* with Keith

Bramich, who still runs it today. Ramsey persuaded many of his musical contacts to write for the publication, and it was soon reaching a global audience.

Ramsey was born in Chelmsford, Essex, and took piano lessons as a child before studying organ at the Royal College of Organists. His career began at Novello, where he eventually rose to become director of publications, assuming responsibility for new composers such as John McCabe and Charles Camilleri. He became friends with the film composer Bernard Herrmann, with whom he set up Basil Ramsey Publisher of Music in 1974.

Ramsey was a fine organist and held posts at St Luke's, Old Street, and St Giles, Cripplegate. He also edited several classical music magazines including *The Musical Times* and *Choir & Organ*. He suffered a serious stroke in 1996 and was consigned to a wheelchair, but continued to work for *Choir & Organ* for another three years. In the early days of *Music & Vision*, Ramsey would receive editorial submissions by fax and type them out using only one finger before sending them for publication. He retired from the website in 2006.

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



































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





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Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra. Don Quixote. <i>Frankfurt Op & Museum Orch/Weigle.</i>  OC893	
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Donizetti Lucia di Lammermoor (pp1978). <i>Sols incl Gruberová & Dvorský/Vienna St Op/Patanè.</i>   C931 1821	
Wagner Fliegende Holländer (pp1959). <i>Sols incl London & Rysanek/Bayreuth Fest Op/Sawallisch.</i>    C936 1821	
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Fiona Sampson

The British poet and writer on why she gave up the violin, and the links between poetry and music

My parents didn't want me to be a professional musician, although they encouraged me to play music and to love it. But when I decided to lay my bow down overnight and become a writer, they were terribly upset. I still don't know what changed, but I suddenly knew that I was more at home with words than music, and always had been.

My mother was a violin teacher and I grew up hearing her teaching and practising; even now, I associate her with the Bach concertos and Bartók's *Romanian Dances*. My parents met at a course for music teachers, although my father isn't a professional musician; so great was his love for my mother than he changed to the cello so that she could be the violinist.

When I was a child, I was paralytically shy around strangers – I felt I had nothing to contribute. And yet I wasn't shy when I went on stage because it didn't seem to be about me, it was about the music. The music gave me something to say, and the violin gave me something to do with my hands.

When I went to the Royal Academy, I guess I was cushioned from any real sense of pressure because I was quite good – I was there on a scholarship, I won prizes – although I think I learnt early on to compete against myself. One becomes trained in developing a sense of urgency in getting it right, of being able to go deeper and further inside oneself.

The Academy was terrific. I led the Manson Ensemble, and we'd give concerts of contemporary music – Tippett, Lutosławski – in churches and halls as well as at the Academy. And from the age of 13 I was also performing with the National Youth Orchestra. One of the first concerts I did was *The Rite of Spring* under Boulez – you can't get better than that.

When I left the Academy, I found myself on the young musicians' circuit, which was exciting. I always found Beethoven hard to play because I love his music so much – especially the Concerto, which demands that purity of sound. It's just an astonishing piece, and even now, when I hear it, it takes my breath away. I found it easier to play the Brahms and Sibelius concertos, even though they're technically more difficult. They're more human in a way, and Brahms in particular is just so suited to the timbre of the modern violin. For years after giving up my instrument, I used to have vivid dreams about playing the Brahms Concerto.

When I stopped playing, I started writing short stories and then, quite quickly, became writer-in-residence for a local health authority on the Isle of Wight. I'd become interested in music and healthcare through a wonderful composer and teacher at the Academy, Margaret Hubicki, who worked for the Council for Music in Hospitals; she had been seriously injured in the Blitz and attributed her recovery to music.



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Most of the music I listen to is on YouTube – I relish the footage of these great performances of the past.

Performances were being brought into hospitals, but I was the first writer; it was a bit of an experiment really. It was extraordinary – you're working with people in the very worst times of their lives with no background in writing, but they understand poetry and are moved by it. They're able to use it because it expresses their condition and their fears, but indirectly. It was a great privilege to be there.

Most musicians think that music transcends words, but it doesn't actually. Poetry is a language in itself, and culturally specific too. As someone who has been a musician, I like the songlike, abstract character of poetry, and I'm interested in what music and poetry have in common – proportion, form and the notion of breath. Some of my poems have been set by composers: Sally Beamish in *Tree Carols* and Stephen Goss in *Rough Music*, for example. And I'm writing a libretto for Philip Grange, for an opera planned for Aldeburgh in 2020.

I don't own a violin because I can't play well anymore and I can't serve the music. Even now, I find it quite hard if I hear one of 'my' pieces – the Beethoven Concerto, or *The Lark Ascending*. But I don't find it *rational* hard. I've never once wanted to be a violinist since I gave it up to become a writer. **G** *'Lyric Cousins: Musical Form in Poetry' (EUP) is out now; 'In Search of Mary Shelley' (Profile) was published in January*

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